



Ahoy!

National Coastwatch Institution
www.nci.org.uk

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

Issue 35 January 2026

From the Editor:

Hello again and welcome to this update of the activities of Hengistbury Head NCI.

We have had a busy year with challenges arising from our reduced access to The Lookout, but the acquisition of our golf buggy has helped tremendously. Interest in our activities continues undaunted and results in us being able to fund the service thanks to the generosity of our supporters.

We are an increasingly important support to longer establish Search and Rescue Services, and enjoy a very good relationship with the RNLI at Mudeford in particular.

I hope this newsletter will help you appreciate more about our activities and realise just how important your financial support is to us.

Ken Male
Editor.

In this issue:

- **In Focus** - a regular feature about one of our volunteers and any personnel highlights - this month one of our newest recruits.
- **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. Sandra Morris

Role within the Station

Watchkeeper



When and why did you join NCI Hengistbury Head ?

I met two lovely Watchkeepers on Avon Beach who told me all about the role and I thought it sounded something worthwhile and interesting, so I applied for the training. I was in the first cohort to be trained after Covid.

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

I have met some really interesting and friendly people and no shift is ever the same, especially as the seascape changes constantly. The workplace is hard to beat.

The training was challenging, as maritime charts and navigation were a mystery to me. I admit there were times when I thought I would never be able to make the grade.

Are you a sailor?

The only sailing I have done is in Christchurch Harbour at what was the Marine Training Centre so no I am definitely not a sailor but I love the sea.

Tell us a little about your career.

I began my career as a teacher at New Milton Junior School and then taught in various schools in and around Bournemouth. I was Headteacher at Heathlands Primary School in West Howe for 8 years before being appointed as Senior Inspector for School Management and Improvement based in Dorchester. My role was to deliver the national training programme for Headteachers, also to support Dorset Headteachers and Governors with all aspects of school improvement, identification of priorities and Headteacher recruitment. I worked in or visited most primary Schools in Dorset and was part of a team of OFSTED inspectors working across the South and West.

You must have had some real career highs and lows!

My passion was delivering excellence in teaching and learning and I found being a Headteacher in an area of considerable deprivation both very challenging but also rewarding. That position provided me with some wonderful highs and some of the worst lows as well.

Hobbies

I used to enjoy running, cycling and going to the gym but these days I practice Iyengar Yoga and belong to The Ramblers. Fairly recently I picked up a hobby from my teenage years and have just passed gold medals in Ballroom and Latin dancing.

I live near the sea and walk down for a swim between April and December.

At home I like cooking and gardening.

Cat? Dog? Stick Insect?

We had a German Shepherd called Barney who was a dearly loved member of our family for nearly 15 happy years.

Favourite tipple

White wine unless I'm on holiday when I like a French 75 or a Cosmopolitan as a treat.

Favourite Book/Film

The Great Gatsby both book and film

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

Every-one at Hengistbury Head NCI has been so supportive and I never feel that I can't ask for help from those who are much more experienced than I am. I feel very privileged to be part of such an important organisation and have enjoyed getting to know how the SAR teams operate.

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

We live in an amazingly beautiful part of the country and I love living here, it is most definitely my favourite place.

My memorable place is Calpe in Spain where we owned a flat in the old town for over 30 years. I still enjoy the Spanish way of life, the towns, cities and beaches.

A more far-flung favourite is St Lucia especially the area near The Pitons, which is breathtaking.

Training Update

RNLI Meeting

Mudford RNLI have recently hosted 2 evening sessions for us at the Lifeboat Station. Both these sessions were well attended and there has been very positive feedback from Watchkeepers. Considered a very interesting, and informative couple of hours, it was hosted by Ian Parker (Helm). As you can see below, there was even a chance to get aboard the recently acquired RIB, Henrietta H.

Our thanks go to Ian, and our Watchkeeping colleague, Robin Pellatt, for organising these sessions.



Meet the Managers Sessions

We are looking to increase the number of watchkeepers topping up for the loss and retirement numbers. Our aim is to attract about 15 from our current waiting list. These sessions give the 'potentials' the opportunity to see the work and our managers first hand on site at the lookout.

Thank you....

From Our station Manager, Peter Holway

Our attendance at CLAC (Christchurch Living Advert Calendar) during December was well attended with huge support from Christchurch Rotary. This was our fourth consecutive year. Along with 23 other local charities attending different locations every evening around town it made December a very pleasant run up to Christmas. We were entertained by a vocalist performer, Lea Martin, with overall charity support from the Primrose Trust. It has become a firm favourite raising funds for our activities.

Our team is growing in numbers with 20 wishing to join with 30+ on the waiting list.

To our daily supporters, our thanks go to you and to the many groups we visit to give our presentations, without your interest and support we would not be able to provide an important service.

Another Long Service

Congratulations and well done to Steve O'Riley seen here receiving his '5 year service award'



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. 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

Last year we were engaged in 63 incidents which involved various emergency services, making our station one of the busiest in the NCI family.

The following are details of incidents since the last issue of Ahoy.

Date of Incident	Incident Summary	Lifeboat involved
16/01/2026	MOP called NCI re. concern for a wing/kite surfer in difficulty. NCI called HMCG and during call, casualty abandoned rig and started swimming ashore with board. Casualty reached shore, CG updated. , No sign of rig which would probably wash up later.	No
12/01/2026	HMCG asked NCI for visual on a wingfoiler reported to be in difficulty by a MOP. NCI searched but saw nothing as visibility poor. CRT tasked, and reported the casualty had been seen leaving water safe, and well, having self rescued. NFA	No
29/12/2025	HMCG called NCI re. report from MOP of a RIB aground. NCI already had visual, 2 POB both wearing buoyancy aids, looking comfortable. Second boat nearby was in contact. Vessel was refloated 30 minutes , later and proceeded to harbour, CG updated. NFA.	No
20/12/2025	NCI heard radio traffic relating to a MISPER. AWLB searching. NCI reported to HMCG a kite surfer was in difficulty, however this was not the casualty being searched for. CG asked NCI for details of , vessels in the area - negative. LB continued search with negative results, and all assets were stood down.	Yes
29/11/2025	NCI had observed a wind surfer struggling to right board, when HMCG rang re. casualty. NCI updated CG to say casualty was out of sight, in blind spot, could be ashore. ILB tasked, and reported no , sighting. Search continued, CRT tasked, and located person who confirmed he was the casualty. NFA.	Yes
27/11/2025	HMCG called NCI re.concern for a small inflatable, 3 POB, drifting off the beach. NCI informed CG they had observed the vessel move away under power. NCI updated its position - possibly fishing. , ILB tasked to check occupants, and was conned to dinghy by NCI. LB reached dinghy, spoke with	Yes

	occupants, who decided to return to beach, as visibility was deteriorating. All safe.	
26/11/2025	NCI were informed of a missing person, Police aware. HMCG informed, but Police handling incident. CG then tasked CRT and ILB, and also CG HELO. Later in the day, AWLB was tasked. , Incident carried over to next day, search continued, but no-one was found. Later Update - MISPER was found safe and well.	Yes
12/11/2025	Local rangers informed NCI of two dead dolphins, two dead seal pups, and nine dead seabirds (one +ve for avian flu) on the beach. NCI informed HMCG, and were asked by the rangers to ask MsOP to stay , away. CG tasked CRT to recover dolphins for Post Mortem examination. NCI passed rangers details to CG.	No
18/10/2025	NCI observed a small motor vessel attempting to enter harbour, and ran aground, and was washed to shoreline and buffeted by waves. HMCG informed, and 4 POB were on sand, ILB and CRT were tasked, , CG requested monitoring. CRT attended, all POB were on beach, lookout closed and incident closed. All safe, and vessel still beached.	Yes

Christmas Dinner Get Together.

Many thanks are due to Vince Tabor again for his stalwart work in organising the Christmas Social Dinner at the Cumberland Hotel. This has become a firm favourite in our calendar and a chance for members and friends to socialise together. It is fair to say that those attending had a thoroughly good time

Looking Ahead

For your diary

This year we look forward to attending the Blue Light Day on the 24th May being held on Mundeford Green, at this event we will be able to inform the wider public of our work.

We are attending a 'Pop Up' Sunday event on the 26th July at Highcliffe Castle with the opportunity to explain our work, our thanks go to BCP Council for staging the event.

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-5.00pm extending to 7.00pm for our summer schedule from 29th March