



POOLE MARITIME TRUST

NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 2026



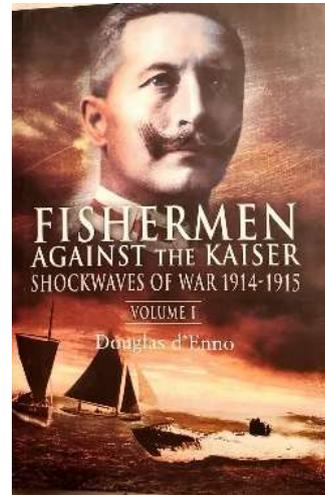
WHAT DID POOLE DO IN WORLD WAR ONE?

“One day twenty minesweepers in line ahead sailed out of Poole under full steam. With their warning sirens echoing all around the harbour they passed at high speed down Brownsea Roads. The wash from the warships flooded water high over the Quay and quayside cottages and our little houses were swamped with water. We were told afterwards they were making for the Dardanelles to force a passage there, with the aims of isolating Germany’s ally, Turkey”.

So recalled Jack Battrick in the Poole Historical Trust’s publication “Brownsea Islander”. Several of us interested in Poole and Brownsea’s history have wondered what was the occasion that Jack who was about five years old at the time had remembered so vividly.

Some years ago, I took part in a seminar about Poole Harbour’s military history. The lecturer who covered World War One referred to this incident but was equally mystified about the occasion. Then last December I happened to be in Winchester Library where I noticed a book about fishermen in World War One. Looking at the index I noticed Poole appeared several times, then turning to the pages indicated I found the answer.

The book I found was Volume One of “Shockwaves of War 1914-18” – the first of two volumes titled “Fishermen against the Kaiser” by Douglas d’Enno published in 2010 by Pen and Sword. (The second volume has yet to appear). This is a very thorough work describing the activities of both men and boats called to service in World War One.



World War One saw the great growth of a new dimension in naval warfare – the mine and the submarine. As a result navies had to find ways of combating this underwater threat. One answer was to commandeer fishing boats – both trawlers and drifters – both to lay anti-submarine nets and to work as minesweeper. These boats proved so valuable, that as well as taking over civilian vessels the Admiralty added to the fleet with its own building programmes. By 1918 the numbers of Royal Navy trawlers and drifters ran into several hundred serving both in home and overseas waters.

In January 1915 the Admiralty ordered 50 each of these vessels to Falmouth, Milford and Larne and 150 to Poole. Each vessel could stream 500 yards of buoyed wire netting which extended down 16 fathoms and working in groups, these vessels could create a net barrier to submarines many miles in length as they did in the Dover and Otranto straits.

Poole was one of the main bases for these vessels, but as well as serving in home waters, many were sent to one of the most deadly theatres of World War One – the Dardanelles. The object of this campaign

was to use naval strength to help Russia which needed to be strengthened against the Central Powers by capturing Constantinople (Istanbul) and allowing the allies into the Black Sea. The first shots were fired on 19 February, but after some initial success the campaign became a disaster but lasted until the final evacuation on 8 January 1916, with Allied casualties of over 250,000.

A constant danger to the allied fleet were submarines and mines and so the decision was taken to send net drifters to the Dardanelles.

On 5 June 1915 thirty of the vessels, six armed with three pounder guns, set out from Poole in the early hours. They were equipped with nets, indicator buoys and 14 days supply of coal. They reached Gibraltar on 13 June continuing eastward two days later, arriving in the Dardanelles on 2 July. They were followed by 20 trawlers from Falmouth. The threat from German and Austro-Hungarian submarines in the Mediterranean grew and in August 1915 another twelve drifters from Poole as part of a fleet of 60 and yet more in January 1916. As well as their protection duties these fishing boats undertook many tasks, such as ferrying men and stores to the beaches. An observer wrote "Few have any conception of the amount of work accomplished by these craft. It would have been almost impossible to have kept the Army supplied without them".

It was probably the June 5 departure that Jack Battrick recalled and it serves to remind us that Poole played a part as a naval base in World War One. Poole's role in that war has tended to be overlooked by the dramatic events that occurred here during 1939-45.

Brian Ellis, Poole Museum Society

PORT UPDATE

by Kevin Mitchell

The newsworthy ship of the moment is *Commodore Clipper*. The *Clipper* took over Poole-Cherbourg sailings on 15th December 2025, at first scheduled to operate every day until the end of March, after which the *Barfleur* will resume service after a well-earned rest. This is the first winter for five years that there has been a continuous passenger and freight service between the two ports, due to demand from freight traffic following the opening of Brittany Ferries' new intermodal rail service between Bayonne in south west France, and Cherbourg. This is traffic that would have been mainly carried on the *MN Pelican* between Poole and Bilbao. It is good to report that the *Clipper* is carrying some high volumes of freight (mainly unaccompanied trailers) from Poole. However, the ship experienced technical problems on 4th January, the scheduled 08.30 departure at first delayed until 10.15, then cancelled altogether. Normal service was resumed on 6th January.

However, longer-term disruption was caused to the Cherbourg service following the derailment of one of the freight trains in Carentan (Normandy) on 11th January. With the line blocked and rail infrastructure damaged, but freight needing to be moved, the *Clipper* re-opened the Poole-Bilbao route on 17th January with two weekly rotations timetabled between the ports, leaving the Cherbourg service suspended until 8th February. The *Clipper* was not ideally suited to winter conditions in the Bay of Biscay, and some sailings had to be cancelled due to bad weather, but she did a good job helping to keep freight traffic moving.

There were no scheduled ferry services between Poole and Cherbourg on 14th and 15th January as *Commodore Clipper* was

taking part in a national training exercise alongside at Poole.



Commodore Clipper exercise (PHC)

This exercise involved counterterrorist police, HM Coastguard, the emergency services and other agencies including Poole Harbour Commissioners. The scenario involved terrorists taking over the ferry and holding its captain hostage as the *Clipper* sailed from France to Poole. There were deaths and injuries amongst the 300 'passengers' (in reality, civilian volunteers) whilst the *Clipper's* regular crew also participated. Photos courtesy of PHC.

High winds caused by Storm Goretti brought disruption to sea travel during the second week of January, with *Commodore Clipper* and Channel Seaways' *Trinity* both affected.

On 9th January the heavy lift cargo ship *Industrial Skipper* arrived at South Quay having departed the Indian port of Chennai around five weeks earlier.



Industrial Skipper (Fraser Hockey)

The tug *Lady Sarah* had earlier arrived from Portland to assist the PHC tug *Herbert Ballam* with the berthing of this 145m long vessel. *Industrial Skipper* sailed to Rotterdam the following morning, captured here and with thanks to Frazer Hockey.

The DFDS high-speed ferry *Levante Jet* returned to Poole on 20th January having covered the St Malo to Jersey route in place of *Tarifa Jet*, which was undergoing maintenance in Dunkerque. However, with the return to service of *Tarifa Jet* delayed, *Levante Jet* sailed back empty to St Malo on 22nd January, stopping off at Jersey to collect stores. *Levante Jet* covered the Jersey-St Malo route but it is thought she will return to Poole for planned winter maintenance and internal refit alongside at the port. DFDS are recruiting crew for *Levante Jet* for its summer season on the Poole-Jersey route.

In other ferry news, *MN Pelican* had been laid-up at Bilbao awaiting orders since the closure of the Poole-Bilbao freight link on 31st August 2025.



MN Pelican

During January, the *Pelican* moved up to Le Havre and it has now been confirmed that French owner Maritime Nantaise has sold the ship to Norwest Ship Management under the name *Link Neptune*. The ship was built in Norway in 1999 and is therefore returning to its country of origin. The *Pelican* was a regular caller at Poole for almost 10 years.

The biggest superyacht to ever call at Poole arrived on 28th January from Hamburg. *Golden Odyssey* is a 124m luxury motor yacht, built in Germany in 2015, and can host 30 guests looked after by 70 crew.



Golden Odyssey (Darryl Morrell)

This impressive craft was photographed at South Quay by Darryl Morrell and Smiler Purdy. In other superyacht news, Poole-based Sunseeker has secured emergency funding from lenders Cheyne Capital and Cross Ocean Partners after its largest export market collapsed. More than 50% of production goes to the United States, but new import tariffs have devastated demand. This has resulted in redundancies and the departure of its chief executive. Three of the UK's largest powerboat builders (Sunseeker, Princess and Fairline) are all in financial difficulty with combined losses exceeding £300m.

Photos taken by Kevin Mitchell unless otherwise stated.

COMMODORE CLIPPER AT POOLE

Commodore Clipper was delivered to Commodore Shipping during the latter part of 1999 to operate Condor Ferries' passenger and freight service between Portsmouth and the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey.



Commodore Clipper at Poole 1999

She is one of four near sister ships all built in the Netherlands, two of which (*Stena Vinga* and Brittany Ferries' *Islander*) also currently operate to the Channel Islands. The other (*Ben-my-Chree*) sails to the Isle of Man. Before entering commercial service, the *Clipper* spent a while alongside the former ro-ro berth 1 at Poole for safety inspections and final preparations for service. It was not until March 2015 that the *Clipper* returned to Poole, covering sailings for the *Condor Liberation*.



Commodore Clipper at Poole 2015

Since then, she has visited Poole on several other occasions either for lay-up or repairs. Last year, Brittany Ferries took over the former Condor operation, with the *Clipper* becoming the designated relief vessel for their Guernsey route, but has also seen use on other routes including Portsmouth-Le Havre and Cherbourg-Rosslare. With *Barfleur* spending the winter laid-up in Caen, the *Commodore Clipper* took over the Poole-Cherbourg (and Poole-Bilbao) operations from mid-December until the end of March.

I experienced a return trip on the *Commodore Clipper* over the Christmas and New Year period.



Commodore Clipper at Poole 2026

Although operating a Brittany Ferries service, the *Clipper* is the last operational vessel still displaying Condor Ferries livery with a blue hull, although she will be repainted all-over white and renamed simply *Clipper* at her next overhaul later this year.



Commodore Clipper - Bridge

The ship does not have bow cargo doors, and loads all traffic over a stern ramp, with a hoistable ramp leading from deck 3 to the upper vehicle deck 5. The officers and crew are all former Condor Ferries staff, and were notably friendly and welcoming. On-board branding was still largely Condor Ferries, with some signage reflecting Brittany Ferries ownership. Passenger facilities are rather limited but perfectly adequate considering that a maximum of 50 cars and their passengers are carried whilst on the Poole-Cherbourg route,

possibly to reduce crew costs whilst maximising freight capacity. The Brasserie cafeteria on deck 7 serves hot and cold meals whilst drinks can be enjoyed in the panoramic Casquets bar on deck 8.



Commodore Clipper Brasserie cafeteria



Commodore Clipper Gasquets Bar

There is also a small duty-free shop on deck 7. Four-berth cabins are also available, as well as reserved seating in the Horizon lounge on deck 7 and Club Class lounge on deck 8.



Commodore Clipper Club Lounge

Key cards for the cabins and reserved lounges must be collected at the on-board Information Desk on deck 7 rather than being issued when checking-in. The interior public areas are all bright and modern, and the ship certainly does not show her 27 years of service. Whilst the *Clipper* may not offer the same range of facilities as the *Barfleur*, we are fortunate to once again have a winter passenger and freight service linking Poole with France.

Interior photos of Commodore Clipper kindly supplied by Darren Holdaway.

	Commodore Clipper	Barfleur
Built	1999	1992
Gross tonnage	14,000	20,133
Length	129m	158m
Decks	10	9
Passengers	500	900

POOLE HARBOUR HERITAGE PROJECT RESEARCH

The last year brought change, but this has not diminished our activities. We sadly lost Professor Tim Darvill OBE as chairman of PPHP and a PMT committee member in October 2024. In 2025 we have now had two meetings of our archaeological team at the PHC offices. I am pleased that there has been strong support for our work and I now lead the group with Grace Jones continuing as secretary. New specialists from a broad range of backgrounds have joined us and we have some new powerful survey equipment.

A huge environmental project has been quietly progressing at the back of the harbour to mitigate rising sea levels and plan for new areas where saltwater can advance. Wessex Archaeology was contracted to run the excavation work at Arne Moors with one of our PPHP members leading the investigation. You

may may have seen some of this on television as the discoveries made national news. Bronze Age round houses have been revealed along with a rare well preserved wooden spade. This exceptional find is undergoing conservation work to stabilise the delicate cell structure of the wood.

In addition are later kilns and a workshop where potters made millions of robust black burnished ware vessels. Extensive experiments with an original rebuilt kiln recreated the precise oxygen free conditions to fire and reduce the iron rich clay to the dark grey finish. This is the famous pottery used by the Roman armies. Look out for more about this important area near Ridge as new walks will eventually be opened to the public.

Three summers ago, we did some work with an older ground penetrating radar on Brownsea Island to try and learn about the monks from Cerne Abbey. We were interested to see if the community may have used the strategic high position near the castle as a location for a tower, having found references on an old map to a 'bell hill'. Last summer we returned with our new radar to create highly detailed maps with 'depth slicing'. This means we can see different features at different depths in the ground and it is remarkable.

Having surveyed 5 large 15m x 15m squares at the highest point, we did not clearly locate the base of a tower, but there are two other potential finds. One is the remains of a 'robbed out' stone wall that could form the curtilage of the monks grounds. This wall was probably to stop animals from entering the consecrated area and is an exciting find, as it points down to the west side where early monastic buildings were known to have been positioned at a lower level. There is just a chance that further work lower down the hill has located the same wall on the east side. The other find is a World War 2

power cable that served a big searchlight position. This is a really interesting area and we will bring in more experts in 2026 as we expect to make more discoveries.



The new radar equipment is shared with East Dorset Antiquarian Society and we are involved with other sites in the Poole and Wimborne areas. This is early days and if you have any interesting sites that may be worth investigating with the radar, do please let us know. I am looking forward to a busy summer with good weather!

*Robert Heaton
Poole Maritime Trust & PPHP*

SHIPWRECK TIMBERS FROM 17TH CENTURY APPEAR ON BEACH

Part of a historic shipwreck has been revealed on a beach in the wake of Storm Chandra



The exposed timbers were discovered at the National Trust-owned Studland Bay, in Dorset, on 28 January. Maritime archaeologists from Bournemouth University believe it forms a missing piece of the Swash Channel wreck that was first discovered in the 1990s in a key shipping approach to Poole Harbour. It is thought that the wreck is most likely the Fame from Hoorn, an armed Dutch merchant ship that ran aground and sank in 1631. The section of ship, thought to be part of the hull, measures approximately 6m (19.6ft) long and 2m (6.5ft) wide. A large layer of planking is missing from the vessel's interior, which indicates the remains have been buried in sand since the 1630s, according to the National Trust.



Experts believe the remains are from this section of the hull of Dutch merchant ship the Fame from Hoorn (Bournemouth University)

Tracey Churcher, general manager for the National Trust in Purbeck, said: "I'm always astounded by the history we find at Studland but this has been a real treasure. "The wooden tree nails are still in place and holding after 400 years. What a testament to the craftsmanship at the time." Final confirmation of the wreck's origin will come from dendrochronology testing that will assess when and where the timbers used to build the ship were grown and whether they match those previously analysed from the Swash Channel wreck.

The team at Bournemouth University have applied to Historic England for a grant to excavate the timbers on the presumption it is part of the protected wreck.



Archaeologists say that while the frames appear eroded the hull planks are in excellent condition
(National Trust)

Hefin Meara, maritime archaeologist from Historic England said: "The Swash Channel wreck is one of only 57 shipwrecks around the coast of England designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973. "Firmly dated remains of vessels predating 1700 are exceptionally rare. We can't say for certain that these fragments come from that wreck site, but it's an intriguing possibility." Protected wrecks have legal protection, meaning that any disturbance or interference is only permitted under an official licence. It is hoped the timbers revealed at Studland will join the collection currently displayed at Poole Museum. Until then, visitors have been urged to help protect the site by not touching the exposed timbers.

The Fame of Hoorn was estimated to be around 40m (131.2ft) long, 10m (32.8m) wide and 15m (49.2ft) high, and would have been capable of carrying more than 40 guns to defend itself against pirates during voyages to the Caribbean to bring back salt. Records state that all 45 members of the crew abandoned the ship safely when it grounded, but the wreck was soon looted by people in the area.

By Stuart Rust,
taken from BBC website

BOURNEMOUTH PLEASURE STEAMERS

Steamers had first visited Bournemouth on the occasion of the opening of the original pier on 17th September 1861, when *Ursa Major* brought passengers from Poole and the steam yacht *Prince* came similarly loaded from Weymouth. In the following year *Medina*, from Southampton, made calls at Bournemouth pier on her trips to Swanage, and a few years later a frequent visitor was the s.s. *Fawn* which, in 1868, was chartered by David Sydenham to make an excursion from the pier to Spithead to witness the naval review during the visit of the Shah of Persia. The success of this enterprise encouraged the formation of the first local steamship company which, in 1869, promoted occasional excursions from Bournemouth in the steamships *Pearl* and *Aid*. But the project was short-lived, running costs proving too high to justify its continuance, and it was another seven years before a similar venture was again undertaken.

Meanwhile, by the public spirit and enterprise of Mr George Burt of Swanage, Bournemouth was provided with its first regular steamship service when his vessel *Heather Bell* commenced her daily sailings on 1st May 1871. The programme was ambitious and provided not only for regular trips to Poole and Swanage but also for excursions at least once a week to Lulworth and the isle of Wight.



Heather Bell became the most popular steamer calling at Bournemouth pier, having made a remarkable first impression on her inauguration trips when she carried 500 passengers from Poole, Bournemouth and Swanage to Alum Bay, the excursion being enlivened by the presence on board of two bands, which played “selections of music in admirable style”. It may be of interest to mention that the return fares from Bournemouth to Alum Bay were 2s 6d for first class passengers and 1s 6d for those who preferred to travel second class. *Heather Bell* was present that year at Bournemouth’s third regatta, held on Monday 21st August, when *Premier*, from Weymouth, and *Vectis*, from Southampton, also graced the proceedings.

Premier, built in 1846, and one of the earliest of Messrs Cosen’s fleet, became nearly a centenarian afloat, her long life coming to an end in 1938, six years after she had been cut into and severely damaged by the submarine *Rainbow* at Portland.



Premier

Heather Bell continued her career as Bournemouth’s favourite pleasure steamer until the end of the season of 1876, after which her sailings were not resumed. In that final year she was in competition, not only with *Premier*, which was making frequent excursions from Weymouth and taking passengers for trips in Bournemouth Bay, but also with such vessels as *Sovereign* which, on 11th May, forestalled *Heather Bell* in securing the larger share of

patronage in excursions arranged to meet the *s.s. Serapis* as she passed the Needles carrying the Prince of Wales home after his visit to India.

The withdrawal of *Heather Bell* was both a disappointment and a spur to action for, by the summer of 1877, notice was being given in the local Press of the formation of a new steamship company, the Bournemouth South Coast Steam Packet Company, which put into service *Criterion*, a vessel capable of crossing the Channel and which was probably the first steamer to make the trip to Cherbourg from Bournemouth Pier. This was in August 1877, the return journey costing £1.

The Bournemouth Steam Packet Company continued to operate for three years during which period the vessels in its service, after *Criterion*, were, successively, *Lord Collingwood*, *Transit*, *Royal Saxon*, *Florence*, *Carham* and *Telegraph*, the two last named steamers being engaged in 1880 on daily trips between Bournemouth, Poole and Swanage.

In 1876 Messrs Cosens & Co had established a regular twice-weekly service between Weymouth and Bournemouth, having in that year purchased *Commodore* to share the programme with *Premier* until, in 1879, the Dutch-built *Empress* was added to their fleet. This was the first steamer to make a trip to Torquay and back in a single day, a feat she accomplished in 13 ½ hours in July 1881.



PS Empress at Bournemouth Pier c. 1905

By this time competition between the two companies had become keen, resulting in greatly reduced fares for excursions and leading, during the 'eighties, to the acquisition of newer and faster steamers with which to exploit the opportunities afforded by the erection of Bournemouth's new pier in 1881. In that year the Bournemouth Steam Packet Company was dissolved and a new company, the Bournemouth, Poole and Swanage Steam Packet Company came into existence.

From this date until the end of the century the Bournemouth Company and Messrs Cosens & Co continued to share the local pleasure steamer traffic between them.

*Taken from David Young
The Story of Bournemouth 1957
pp. 105-107*

SPOTLIGHT ON THE RNLI ALL-WEATHER LIFEBOAT CENTRE

by Andrew S. Cooke



This month there is something a little different for this section of the newsletter as the subject is the RNLI's purpose-built All-Weather Lifeboat Centre, which celebrated a decade of operation in 2025. The writer has had a life-long fascination with the RNLI, thanks to his father's interest and his late Uncle being an Engineer on the Yarmouth (I.o.Wight) lifeboat for almost 35 years. Childhood memories of polishing brass and copper

aboard Yarmouth's Arun Class lifeboat, RNLB Joy & John Wade, and ad-hoc visits to lifeboat stations and repair yards around the country during family holidays are still like it was yesterday.

Since opening, and just prior to this feature being completed, the All-Weather Lifeboat Centre had built 43 Shannon class lifeboats and had completed 116 lifeboat refits and extended maintenance periods.

The British Royal National Lifeboat Institution was formed in 1824 with the 200th anniversary being celebrated in 2024. It began as the brainchild of Sir William Hillary, who witnessed the tragic loss of life from dozens of ships that foundered in the Irish Sea off the Isle of Man. Initially the organisation was known as the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck. The name was changed to the now household name of Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in 1854. With the support of London MP Thomas Wilson and West India Merchants Chairman George Hibbert, the Institution was founded as a charity on 4th March 1824.

Today, the RNLI has an active fleet of over 340 lifeboats, ranging from 3.8m to 17m in length, plus a relief fleet and four active and three relief hovercraft.

New Era for Newbuilds

On 10th January 2013 the RNLI received planning permission from the Borough of Poole allowing the charity to build a facility at its Poole HQ to bring all-weather lifeboat production in-house. The announcement concerning the new RNLI All-Weather Lifeboat Centre (ALC) secured the future of all-weather lifeboat production and maintenance in an era when long serving boatyards were falling by the wayside or being increasingly unable to meet requirements. The keys for the new ALC

were handed over in March 2015 with the major contractor having been J.B Leadbitter & Co Ltd (Bouyges UK Ltd). The project took 2.5 years from the original submission of a planning application through to approval and finally construction of the building.

Prior to the ALC being built, the site of the former Bolson's Boatyard, a total of 17,833sqm, was cleared of the existing Lifeboat Maintenance Centre to then permit a local strategic flood risk assessment that required both the site ground level and its surrounding quay wall to be raised before the facility was built by 1.4m and 1m respectively. Axle loads of up to 60 tonnes were specified for the ALC which is comparable to the loading accommodated in airports, so the groundwork had to cater for this, using load-transferring foundations. The total number of paving blocks laid around the building totalled 385,000.

The ALC building comprises a 3-span steel portal frame that houses two barrel-roof building volumes separated by a covered central courtyard. The buildings are clad in composite steel and aluminium, and covered by a Kalzip standing seam roof.

Building A contains a three-storey boat hall with a clear span of 50m x 20m while Building B contains an even bigger boat hall with a clear span of 70m x 20m. Both halls are designed for the production of boats and can accommodate several boat hulls at any one time. The extraordinary additional structural capability this requires has ensured that the building's steel sections alone weigh 12,000 tonnes. They also incorporate proprietary ties and connections as the steel is too thick and dense to be directly drilled into.

Official Opening



Friday 21st August 2015 saw the official opening of the new ALC, attended by around 500 guests.

RNLI Chief Executive Paul Boissier addressed the gathering with two of the RNLI's youngest fully qualified crew members, John McDermid (17) from Arranmore and Caryl Jones (20) from Porthdinllaen, ringing a bell as the doors of the ALC rose for the first official time.



This bell will be rung every time a newly built ALB is launched. Phil Coulter's Lifeboat Anthem 'Home from the Sea' played to mark the occasion. The new facility was also first opened to the public on 22nd/23rd August 2015.

The plan was for the ALC to become a British centre of engineering excellence and has revolutionised the lifeboat construction and maintenance programme, bringing every stage of the

production process under one roof. Around 225 people work within the new building, this figure comprising 150 production staff and approximately 75 in office space above Buildings A & B. Lymington based SAR Composites later transferred to the ALC. Interim repairs are still out sourced to existing RNLI partner boatyards when it is not viable to return a vessel to the ALC, but the building of all rigid lifeboats is now undertaken at the Poole ALC site.

The lifeboats have a 7-year overhaul cycle per vessel, and the newest 25 knot Shannon Class members have a 50-year life expectancy for the hull & superstructure. (Fabricated from composites).



Shannon Class construction)

When viewed from the approach road, Building A is to the left and Building B is to the right, joined by the central covered courtyard. The latter can be used for quick all-weather maintenance tasks year-round whilst the lifeboat remains in the self propelled hoist and also offers shelter when lifeboats are moved between bays in both buildings. Building A measures 85m x 30m and has a workshop floor space of 5,000m². This vast space is essential in order to enable several boats to be constructed, maintained and repaired all at the same time. The lifeboat maintenance/build bays in each building measure 20m long by 10m wide. The roller doors across each bay and two of the paint preparation/completion bays measure

10m wide by 10m high. The bays are the size they are to cater for a Severn Class lifeboat, the RNLI's largest, complete with aerials and fittings.



Severn Class – Yarmouth, Isle of Wight

The three bays in Building A are primarily for the construction of the lifeboat hulls with air purification and ventilation to cope with the tasks undertaken in this environment. A mezzanine level runs along the rear of the bays permitting direct access onto the lifeboats housed there and the storage of tools etc close to where they are needed. When required, a raised walkway cell mirroring the hull profile is put in place around the vessel removing the need for ladders. In the ceiling of each building is a sliding welded gantry crane, capable of hoisting up to five tonnes for the manoeuvring of heavy components.

At the rear of Building A are the three paint shops, one smaller and two that are 20m long/10m wide and 10m high size. The left-hand side booth and smaller right-hand booth are for the preparation processes with the central booth being of a sterile environment where the top coat paint layers are applied. Again, the two large bays can accommodate a Severn Class complete. The yard outside of Paint Shops 1/2/3 includes dedicated areas where vessels are cleaned once lifted from the water, with all run-off draining in to tanks below ground.



Lifeboat engines

From the outside, Building B is almost a mirror image of Building A. But what goes on inside is very different in this paint-free clean area. Here 7-bays handle the assembly stages of newbuilds with two bays presently used for lifeboat maintenance. Again, a mezzanine level runs along the rear of the bays permitting direct access onto the lifeboats housed there with the storage of tools and parts immediately next to where they are needed. When required a raised walkway cell encompasses the hull profile along this side of the production line as well thus enhancing accessibility and safety.

To reduce wasted man hours the build and repair bays are clinical in their precision. Dedicated tool bags for dedicated jobs are provided to personnel to avoid time lost sourcing tools or parts with tasks set for each worker daily. Another economy measure is the development of a system where goods are delivered in purpose built jigs to eradicate the need for packaging, associated charges in supply and disposal plus the man hours needed to pack and unpack. The ALC is supplied by the nearby RNLI Support Centre so that parts are always there when needed.

Offices above in the third storey of each building cater for 75 personnel from the design and maintenance departments etc. Efficiency even runs to the parts drawer systems that should enable each part to always be in stock, i.e. nuts & bolts etc.

Duplicate drawers for each part are restocked as one becomes empty. The fault finding team is also based on the mezzanine level so are on hand to deal with issues rather than being detached from the scene in an office elsewhere. Overlooking the production line in Building B is an observation room where guests and the representatives of those funding a newbuild can oversee progress.

From the outset, six Shannon Class all-weather lifeboats were produced at the ALC per year, the first of which began production in February 2016, with the next following approximately two months later as the 12-stage rolling production cycle “pulses” every 8 weeks, so one lifeboat takes 2 years to complete. The layout of the ALC is “future proofed” to cope with the sizes of future lifeboat generations to be built there along with the long-term goal of further enhanced efficiency. At the time of writing, plans were in place to move the Inshore Lifeboat Centre at East Cowes, IOW, to the ALC.

All-Weather Lifeboat Centre Specifications

Cost:	£11.2m approx.
Size of Site:	17,833sqm
Building Dimensions:	85m x 30m each approx.
Building A Floor Space:	5,000m ²
Building A Clear Span:	50m x 20m
Building B Clear Span:	70m x 20m
Large Paint Bays:	20m long/10m wide/10m high
Bay Access Doors:	10m wide x 10m high
Completed:	March 2015
Officially Opened:	21 st August 2015

*** Facts and figures supplied by RNLI in 2015 and 2026.*

All images by Andrew Cooke



**SATURDAY 16TH MAY 2026
SOLENT PORTS & RIVERS CRUISE**

**This planned cruise has
been cancelled**

PADDLE STEAMER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

FORTHCOMING MEETING

Suncliff Hotel, East Overcliff Drive, Bournemouth BH1 3AG

7 March 2026 at 14:00

Richard Turner presents another of his excellent film shows featuring steamers around the coast plus other transport related films including one of Silver City Airways.

Entry is free and open to all.



"EMBASSY" ALONGSIDE POOLE QUAY IN 1966

**THESE ARE THE FILMS TO BE SHOWN
AT THE MEETING**

Silver City Airways

Glen Gower cross channel 1955

Monarch to Portsmouth 1960

Cardiff Queen Clovelly 1960

**Waverley Newhaven and round I.O.W
1978**

Hurn Air show 1982

Maid of the Loch

Woolwich Ferry 1960's

**Eastbourne Tramway 1969. Before they
moved to Seaton and became Seaton
Tramway**

Princess Elizabeth Torquay 1960

Bournemouth Pier being rebuilt 1979-81

**Also a number of small clips and some
video footage of Waverley in 2025**



Spring Programme 2026
Poole Maritime Trust Talks
at the
Royal Motor Yacht Club Sandbanks,
Poole BH13 7RE

19 March 2026
8.00pm

David Bailey - Wildlife Photographer.

15 April 2026
11.00 for 11:30am
Luncheon to follow

Poole Maritime Trust AGM & Luncheon at RMYC
Speaker: Robert Heaton

Poole Maritime Trust members may purchase drinks from the main bar (if the upstairs bar is not manned).

There are disabled facilities on the ground floor and facilities on the first floor.

If you arrive by car there is parking on the main road, Panorama Road. If arriving by Taxi the main entrance to the RMYC is off Old Coastguard Road.



SOCIETY FOR POOLE

TALKS 2026

All meetings are held at the Oakdale Club, 92 Darbys Lane, Poole BH15 3EU 7pm for 7.30pm

Tuesday 17 th March	Downstream Dorset Rivers – river tales & local history Mary van Coller
Tuesday 21 st April	AGM – talk TBC
Tuesday 19 th May	Tales of the Riverbank – social & commercial history of rivers Stour & Avon Chris Wood
Tuesday 16 th June	The man who didn't succeed (John Bankes, Kingston Lacy) David Beardsley
Tuesday 21 st Jul	Hospital Blues – nursing in Dorset WWI Luke Moulard
Tuesday 15 th September	Policing in Poole & Dorset Richard Hutley
Tuesday 20 th October	A view from above (aerial view of Poole) Ken Standing
Tuesday 17 th November	The Voyage of the Molly (slave trade Poole) Steve Richardson