

SISM/bw
LOM NEWHAVEN

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Dear Mike,

I have read with interest the return of service and your Divisional Inspector's report on the service by the Newhaven Severn class all weather lifeboat on 1 August 2006 when the lives of two bathers were saved. The actions of Coxswain Ian Johns are going to be recognised in a framed letter of thanks signed by the Chairman of the RNLI. However, it is readily apparent that Coxswain Johns was ably supported by a very professional and competent crew and I am writing to acknowledge this.

ON 1243, RNLB *Elizabeth and David Acland* was launched at 1932, following reports that two people had been swept out to sea to the west of Newhaven. Coxswain Johns was in command, the Mechanic was Andrew MacQueen, and the crew were Phil Corsi, Laurence Deakin, Nick Gentry, Chris Hamilton, Chris O'Connor, Scott Parker and Leslie Summers.

The winds were westerly force 6 to 7 and the seas were rough because of the effects of wind over tide. The seas breaking over the bows hampered visibility. Guided by Coastguard and NCI personnel ashore, the lifeboat was approximately mid way along the western breakwater when a woman was seen, struggling in the water. She was caught in a rip some 50 metres from the breakwater and approximately 100 metres from the shore. It was too rough to launch the Y boat, neither was there time to do so. Using the scrambling net deployed over the starboard side, Phil Corsi and Nick Gentry entered the water to recover the woman, passing her to the rest of the deck crew. She was safely recovered despite her shocked condition, her large size and the proximity of the breakwater.

The second casualty was then located in heavy surf, closer to the shore less than 50 metres from the breakwater. He was experiencing both the undertow and the backwash and was unable to swim ashore. Despite the high risk to the lifeboat from the rocky and debris-strewn shallows, Coxswain Johns took the lifeboat to within two boat lengths of the shore and breakwater and had his crew throw heaving lines to the man. The man caught one and was pulled to the lifeboat where he was recovered by Phil and Nick on the scrambling net like his female companion. The lifeboat then returned to station where the man and woman were handed over to an ambulance at 1950.

This was a brief, but extremely effective service. Although I have mentioned Phil and Nick for their roles, it is apparent that everyone on board the lifeboat contributed to the success of this service. Well done, all of you!

*Yours sincerely,
Michael Vlasto.*

Michael Vlasto
Operations Director

