

“The Lifeboat Crew” by WH Weatherhead, c. late 19th Century



National Historic Ships UK
Registers Review: Rescue Group
Updated May 2026

Summary

In 2013 an [assessment methodology](#) was developed for use in analysing craft on the National Register of Historic Vessels (NRHV) in terms of their significance and potential eligibility for inclusion on the National Historic Fleet (NHF). Public consultation brought further refinement to this process and a summary of responses can be viewed here: [Review of the National Historic Fleet and Assessment Methodology 2014 \(nationalhistoricships.org.uk\)](#).

The [National Historic Fleet](#) is a sub-section of the NRHV comprising vessels which are considered to: be of pre-eminent national or regional significance; span the spectrum of UK maritime history; illustrate changes in construction and technology; and merit a higher priority for long term conservation.

Funding was sought to implement this methodology via a full review of the National Registers but when it proved difficult to secure the necessary grant aid, a decision was taken to continue the process internally, albeit over a longer time frame. Due to available resources, the current review only covers those vessels presently listed on the National Historic Ships Registers and does not extend to those on the [National Small Boat Register](#) or others as yet unrecorded.

The first phase of the review has been undertaken with a focus on registered historic lifeboats, with 157 craft assessed and scored as part of this process across 2021-2024. The results of this exercise are set out in the following Report and summarise changes made to the NHF following this piece of work.

Methodology

In line with the priorities set out in the NHS-UK [Forward Plan 2019-2023](#), a Registration Group was formed comprised of representatives from the NHS-UK Council of Experts. It met during 2021 to revisit the composition and scoring of the lifeboats, known as the 'Rescue Group,' which had previously been worked on during a pilot exercise in 2014 and not revisited since.

A smaller working group was also set up to undertake lifeboat assessments, comprised of the NHS-UK Director, Resources Manager and Policy, Projects & Course Manager, with Stuart Anderson as the dedicated project volunteer. Dr Joanna Bellis, Heritage Officer for the RNLI, was co-opted to provide specialist expertise. Simon Stephens, Curator of the Ship Model and Boat Collections at Royal Museums Greenwich and member of the NHS-UK Council of Experts was asked to give support on vessel visits and with technical queries.



The scoring system, with its component parts including specialist scores, was re-examined initially to ensure it was fit for purpose (see Appendix A) and updated charts were put in place to provide a breakdown of rarity across the group calculated by class and propulsion. As outlined above, a decision was taken not to include the National Small Boat Register (NSBR) in this project due to the team's limited capacity, as well as the fact that the NSBR database was undergoing maintenance. Therefore, only those vessels under 33 feet in length overall that were already on the Fleet were analysed for this group, although this can be revisited in future if resources permit.

The individual lifeboats on the National Register were scored by working group members, with results reviewed by a smaller team to ensure consistency of approach. A call was put out via the NHS-UK website, e-newsletter and social media, asking owners of historic lifeboats to check their online entries for accuracy and get in touch with any additional data they might hold. Custodians were also contacted with specific queries, or to obtain missing and more up to date information.

Once all vessels in the group had been scored, those with the highest rating were revisited as possible NHF candidates. At this stage, it was possible to assess potential implications for the existing Fleet and highlight which vessels might be subject to a change in status. The custodians of lifeboats affected by a potential change were contacted and visited where necessary to verify the findings of the paper exercise. [Statements of significance](#) were written for all Fleet vessels and published online.

Findings

157 lifeboats were identified and scored as part of this process, with lifeboats therefore comprising 8% of all vessels currently on the National Registers. These included both RNLI lifeboats and private rescue craft. Before the review started, there were only 115 lifeboats on the NRHV, but the number increased throughout the task as more craft were discovered and registered, or as new information enabled us to move vessels previously on the National Archive due to insufficient data across to the live Register.

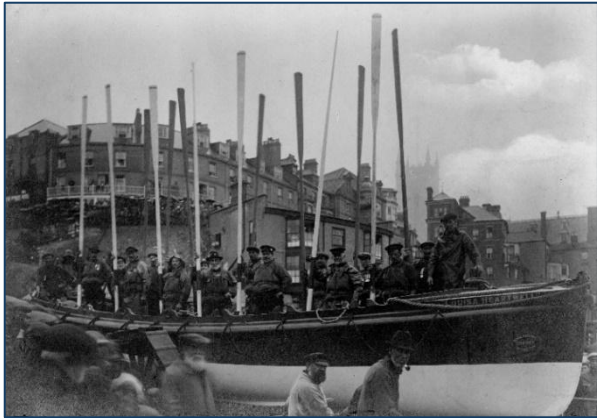
Of the nine lifeboats in this group previously listed on NHF, four were now found to score significantly lower than the top range suggesting that their status needed to change. This was due to various factors including alterations in their material circumstances and the registration of other craft of the same type which scored more highly. Their custodians have been informed and the status of these craft has now been amended so that they will continue to sit on the NRHV but no longer on the Fleet.

A total of 15 lifeboats have been included on the Fleet following this Review, five of which have retained their existing status and ten of which have been newly assessed as being sufficiently significant to merit this recognition. This outcome means that 10% of all registered lifeboats are represented on the National Historic Fleet which has been agreed by the working group as being proportionate to the overall number reviewed.

A full breakdown of vessels examined during the Review and their final allocated status can be found in Appendix B.

What will happen next?

Whenever a lifeboat is added to the NRHV in future, it will be assessed internally using the same methodology and scoring system. If it scores at the same level or higher than an existing lifeboat in the Fleet, it will be flagged for potential review and comparison against these craft. Likewise, if we are informed of any material changes to lifeboats on the Fleet, their existing score will be updated and checked to see if this could affect their status.



An annual survey will be sent to custodians of Fleet vessels, asking them to advise of any significant alterations to the craft in their care, the conditions in which it is kept, or its method of use. These returns will be assessed each January alongside any vessels identified during the year as being potential Fleet candidates. Vessel scores will be updated as necessary and any revisions to status made at this time, so that the Fleet remains current and responsive to changes in vessel circumstances. If custodians do not complete the necessary paperwork or update us accordingly, it may impact on the vessel's status and could lead to removal from the Fleet.

The Ongoing Review

Work has already begun to assess the next set of vessels within the Service category of the National Register which is 'Tugs'. In Autumn 2022, a request was issued via social media and the NHS-UK newsletter for individuals with specialist knowledge of this type of craft who might be co-opted to the Working Group as experts. Several names were put forward who we will be engaging with in the coming months.

79 tugs have been identified as currently listed on the National Register of Historic Vessels and preliminary assessments have been undertaken on 30, with visits to 12. A full report will be published on the 'tugs group' once all assessments have been completed. In the meantime, we encourage any tug custodians to ensure their vessel entries on the Register are accurate and fully updated.

You can keep informed about the latest progress via our Registers Review project page at: [Registers review | National Historic Ships](#)

National Historic Ships UK

May 2024

Images © RNLI

Update May 2025:

Following the annual survey of National Historic Fleet vessels undertaken in January, a further review was carried out of new lifeboats added to the Register over the last 12 months to see whether any changes were required to the composition of rescue craft on the Fleet and to update the group rarity chart. Lifeboat Edward Bridges (Civil Service No. 37) which was registered in October 2024 scored sufficiently highly to be awarded Fleet status and the addition of 3 lifeboats to the Register across the year, bringing the total number to 161, enabled us to add her to the Fleet whilst retaining a 10% overall Fleet representation for this group.

National Historic Ships UK**May 2025****Update May 2026:**

Following the annual survey of National Historic Fleet vessels undertaken in January, a further review was carried out of new lifeboats added to the Register over the last 12 months to see whether any changes were required to the composition of rescue craft on the Fleet and to update the group rarity chart. No new vessels were added to the National Historic Fleet as a result of this.

National Historic Ships UK**May 2026**

APPENDIX A – RESCUE GROUP SCORING SYSTEM

CORE SCORE		Description	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	All vessels	Age (date of build)	Less than 50 years old (DNMC)	50-99 years old	100-149 years old	150-199 years old	200-249 years old	250+ years
2	All vessels	Innovations (new ideas and techniques)	Contains no design innovation of importance / built by unknown designer	Contains one important design innovation (plus 1 point for known builder or designer)	Contains two or more important design innovations (plus 1 point for known builder or designer)	Add one point for each named innovation (maximum 4 points) plus an additional point for known builder or designer		
3	All vessels	Historical associations (people, events and operational area)	No historical associations	Solely local significance	Solely regional significance	Regional significance with elements of national significance	National significance with elements of international significance (at least one rescue involving international shipping)	Clear international significance (e.g. took part in Dunkirk evacuation 1940)
4a	Vessels whose primary purpose is static preservation (afloat or ashore)	Level of originality (hull fabric / design features / vessel form / rig / internal and deck fittings)	No conservation principles applied / very little original fabric or features surviving	Vessel preserved / restored with introduction of considerable new materials	Vessel preserved / restored with substantial original fabric or features missing	Vessel preserved / restored with some loss of originality to all elements	Vessel preserved / restored with hull significantly intact but with some features missing or over-restored	Vessel preserved with exceptional originality of fabric and key features of form and function intact
5a	Vessels whose primary purpose is static preservation (afloat or ashore)	Condition	Significant problems, fabric in extremely poor condition or status unknown	Fabric in poor condition and declining	Unsatisfactory, fabric being inappropriately preserved or unstable	Visible improvement in condition or vessel stabilised, but with limited controls in place	Satisfactory, with any minor changes under control and monitored	Optimal - vessel stabilised and regularly monitored in appropriate environmental conditions
4b	Vessels whose primary purpose is operational use	Level of originality (hull fabric / design features / vessel form / rig / internal and deck fittings)	No conservation principles applied / little original material surviving	Significant reconstruction, adaptation or maintenance work which doesn't use like-for-like materials or changes vessel appearance	Extreme reconstruction applied using conservation principles	Major reconstruction / adaptation resulting in loss of key features or new material out-weighting old	Reconstruction or adaptation where key features have been accurately and sympathetically replicated using like-for-like materials, without impact to form or function	All key features of form and function intact: no reconstructive work carried out other than maintenance / minor reconstruction or restoration work resulting in minimal introduction of new materials
5b	Vessels whose primary purpose is operational use	Condition	Very poor and deteriorating condition, or status unknown	Significant localised problems	Vessel in need of repairs / significant re-fit / no maintenance policy	Vessel in good or stabilised condition / regular maintenance	Condition very good / any localised problems do not prevent operation / annual maintenance plan in place.	Condition excellent and 5 year+ maintenance plan in place.
6	All vessels	Rarity (based on numbers of other known vessels identified in overall batch)	100 plus	51-100 surviving examples	11-50 surviving examples	6-10 surviving examples	2-5 surviving examples	Unique survivor

SPECIALIST SCORE		Description	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	Rescue	Vessel service record / lives saved in service (excluding Dunkirk)	Less than 50 lives saved	50-99 lives saved, no medal service	100-199 lives saved and/or bronze medal service	200-299 lives saved and/or silver medal service	300-499 lives saved and/or gold medal service	500+ lives saved and / or multiple gold medal service
2	Rescue	Age (based on age variants in top batch)	1960 onwards	1946-1959	1919-1945	1903-1918	1853-1902	1802-1852
3	Rescue	Rarity (based on numbers under consideration in top batch, calculated by type - twins, single, pulling/sailing)	10+ surviving examples	7-9 surviving examples	4-6 surviving examples	2-3 surviving examples	One off craft either RNLI or private build, or only vessel of this type on Registers	Unique survivor of several built

APPENDIX B - REGISTERS REVIEW - VESSELS IN RESCUE GROUP

As of January 2026

Registration Number	Vessel Name	NHS-UK Status Post Review	Vessel Type	Visited during Review
101	Alfred Corry	National Historic Fleet	Norfolk & Suffolk	Y
461	Trimilia	National Historic Fleet	Ramsgate	Y
627	Zetland	National Historic Fleet	North Country	Y
723	William Gammon	National Historic Fleet	Watson	Y
1446	H.F. Bailey	National Historic Fleet	Watson	Y
1736	St.Cybi	National Historic Fleet	Barnett	Y
1763	J.C. Madge	National Historic Fleet	Liverpool	Y
1768	Foresters Centenary	National Historic Fleet	Liverpool	Y
2204	Robert and Ellen Robson	National Historic Fleet	Rubie	Y
2481	Henry Ramey Upcher	National Historic Fleet	North Country	Y
3604	Bedford	National Historic Fleet	North Country	Y
3671	Grace Paterson Ritchie	National Historic Fleet	Clyde	N
3711	Louisa Heartwell	National Historic Fleet	Liverpool	Y
3793	Sir William Arnold	National Historic Fleet	Arun	Y
3799	44-001	National Historic Fleet	Waveney	Y
3806	Edward Bridges	National Historic Fleet	Arun	N
93	Lloyds	Register	Barnett	N
421	Charles Cooper Henderson	Register	Watson	N
426	Stenoa	Register	Watson	N
772	Stadats	Register	Watson	N
1279	James Stevens No 14	Register	Norfolk & Suffolk	Y
1500	Ryder	Register	Self-righter	N
1515	Thomas McCunn	Register	Watson	N
1575	Watkin Williams	Register	Watson	N
1576	Herbert Leigh	Register	Watson	Y
1624	Swn Y Mor	Register	Watson	N
1684	Langham	Register	Self-righter	N
1687	B.A.S.P.	Register	Watson	Y
1732	T.G.B	Register	Watson	N
1733	Susan Ashley	Register	Watson	Y
1735	St. Paul	Register	Norfolk & Suffolk	Y
1737	Sir James Knott	Register	Oakley	N
1750	Mary Pullman	Register	Oakley	N
1759	Jesse Lumb	Register	Watson	N
1760	Jane Anne	Register	Self-righter	N
1762	J.G. Graves of Sheffield	Register	Oakley	Y
1774	The Doctors	Register	Oakley	N
1776	Calouste Gulbenkian	Register	Oakley	N

1783	Willam Cantrell Ashley	Register	Liverpool	N
1883	William and Kate Johnston	Register	Barnett	Y
1911	Elizabeth Simpson	Register	Norfolk & Suffolk	Y
1956	Chapman	Register	Liverpool	N
1962	Manchester and Salford	Register	Watson	N
2011	Francis Forbes Barton	Register	Self-righter	N
2028	Archibald & Alexander M Paterson	Register	Barnett	N
2039	Penros	Register	Watson	N
2047	Henry Frederick Swann	Register	Self-righter	N
2124	Peter and Sarah Blake	Register	Barnett	N
2174	William Riley of Birmingham and Leamington	Register	Rubie	Y
2175	Thomas Corbett	Register	Liverpool	N
2176	William and Laura	Register	Liverpool	N
2177	Friendly Forester	Register	Liverpool	N
2178	Grace Darling	Register	Liverpool	Y
2179	The Manchester Unity of Oddfellows	Register	Oakley	Y
2181	The Will and Fanny Kirby	Register	Oakley	Y
2182	Cyril & Lilian Bishop	Register	Self-righter	N
2185	Guide of Dunkirk	Register	Self-righter	N
2198	Charles Henry Ashley	Register	Watson	N
2199	Queen Victoria	Register	Self-righter	N
2200	Richard	Register	Self-righter	N
2201	John & Naomie Beattie	Register	Self-righter	N
2202	Lizzie Porter	Register	Self-righter	Y
2203	Louisa II	Register	Rubie	N
2206	Lucy Lavers	Register	Liverpool	N
2210	Birds Eye	Register	Oakley	N
2211	Mary Gabriel	Register	Rother	N
2220	Helen Smitton	Register	Watson	N
2236	Anne Allen	Register	Liverpool	N
2242	Aguila Wren	Register	Liverpool	N
2243	Samuel Fletcher of Manchester	Register	Watson	N
2244	City Of Nottingham	Register	Self-righter	N
2255	Howard D	Register	Liverpool	N
2258	Guy and Clare Hunter	Register	Watson	N
2286	George Elmy	Register	Liverpool	N
2311	Nellie and Charlie	Register	Liverpool	N
2324	The Always Ready	Register	Liverpool	N
2329	Joseph Soar	Register	Watson	N
2363	The Chieftain	Register	Liverpool	Y
2405	Helen Wycherley	Register	Watson	N

2428	Duke of Cornwall	Register	Barnett	N
2451	J.W. Archer (ON 685)	Register	Watson	N
2458	North Foreland	Register	Watson	Y
2470	Pentland	Register	Watson	N
2475	J & W	Register	Watson	N
2558	James and Mary Walker	Register	Watson	N
2605	Mary Scott	Register	Norfolk & Suffolk	N
2611	Louise Stephens	Register	Watson	N
2645	Frederick Kitchen	Register	Watson	Y
2653	The Elliot Gill	Register	Liverpool	N
2658	Laura Moncur	Register	Watson	N
2660	The Hampshire Rose	Register	Rother	N
2662	William Henry and Mary King	Register	Oakley	N
2691	Canadian Pacific	Register	Watson	N
2693	Dunleary II	Register	Watson	N
2708	Sir Samuel Kelly	Register	Watson	N
2720	Edmund and Mary Robinson	Register	Watson	N
2739	Edward Birkbeck	Register	Norfolk & Suffolk	N
2753	Dorothy & Philip Constant	Register	Watson	N
2812	Tillie Morrison Sheffield	Register	Self-righter	N
2814	James and Mariska Joicey	Register	Solent	N
2913	Gallichan	Register	Watson	N
2963	Jones Gibb 2	Register	Watson	N
2996	W & S	Register	Watson	N
3468	Sarah Ann Austin	Register	Liverpool	N
3539	Har-Lil	Register	Oakley	N
3611	Charterhouse	Register	Self-righter	N
3645	Jane Hannah Macdonald III	Register	Self-righter	N
3663	James Stevens No 10	Register	Self-righter	Y
3687	St. Andrew	Register	Watson	N
3702	Mary Joicey	Register	Oakley	N
3706	The Robert	Register	Watson	N
3707	James Leath	Register	Norfolk & Suffolk	Y
3712	T.B.B.H	Register	Watson	N
3713	John & Mary Meiklam of Gladswood	Register	Norfolk & Suffolk	N
3727	Colby Cubbins 2	Register	Watson	N
3730	Sarah Townsend Porritt	Register	Watson	N
3751	Charles Dibdin	Register	Self-righter	Y
3769	Phantom	Register	Self-righter	N
3778	J.W. Archer (ON 933)	Register	Watson	N
3801	Hilton Briggs	Register	Barnett	N

3828	Valentine Wyndham Quin	Register	Oakley	N
3845	The Baltic Exchange	Register	Watson	N
3849	Amelia	Register	Oakley	N
3855	Priscilla MacBean	Register	Self-righter	Y
3862	AMiTy	Register	Watson	N
423	Dowager	Archived	Watson	N
698	Tyne	Archived	North Country	Y
1048	Eitenna Anne	Archived	Liverpool	N
1241	Lady Kylsant	Archived	Watson	N
1772	Earl & Countess Howe	Archived	Oakley	N
1882	The Princess Royal	Archived	Watson	N
1898	Arklow	Archived	Watson	N
1954	Dunleary	Archived	Watson	N
2027	City of Bradford III	Archived	Watson	N
2145	James and John Young	Archived	Liverpool	N
2180	Samuel	Archived	Oakley	N
2183	Edward and Eliza	Archived	Rubie	N
2184	Grey Fox	Archived	Watson	Y
2186	Can Y Don	Archived	Self-righter	N
2187	Isaac and Mary Bolton	Archived	Self-righter	N
2205	Lady Harrison	Archived	Self-righter	N
2230	The Isa and Penryn Milsted	Archived	Liverpool	N
2262	Southern Africa	Archived	Barnett	N
2268	Herbert John	Archived	Liverpool	N
2346	Manchester and Salford XXIX	Archived	Watson	N
2374	Mabel Alice	Archived	Arun	N
2450	Gramarie	Archived	Watson	N
2601	Henry Finlay	Archived	Self-righter	N
2709	Richard Vernon and Mary Garforth of Leeds	Archived	Watson	N
2715	Janet Hoyle	Archived	Liverpool	N
2751	Jozef De Waey	Archived	Watson	N
2786	Freelance	Archived	Liverpool	N
2851	Valas	Archived	Liverpool	N
2865	The Elizabeth Austin	Archived	Self-righter	N
3522	Ann Letitia Russell	Archived	Watson	N
3578	Frank Spiller Locke	Archived	Barnett	N
3594	Charles Henry	Archived	Oakley	N
3597	John F Kennedy	Archived	Waveney	N
3640	Horatio Brand	Archived	Self-righter	N
3643	Rose Marion	Archived	Watson	N
3685	SSR Athlone Castle 47700	Archived	Ship's Lifeboat	N

3823	John Gellatly Hyndman	Archived	Barnett	N
3858	Ambler	Archived	Self-righter	N