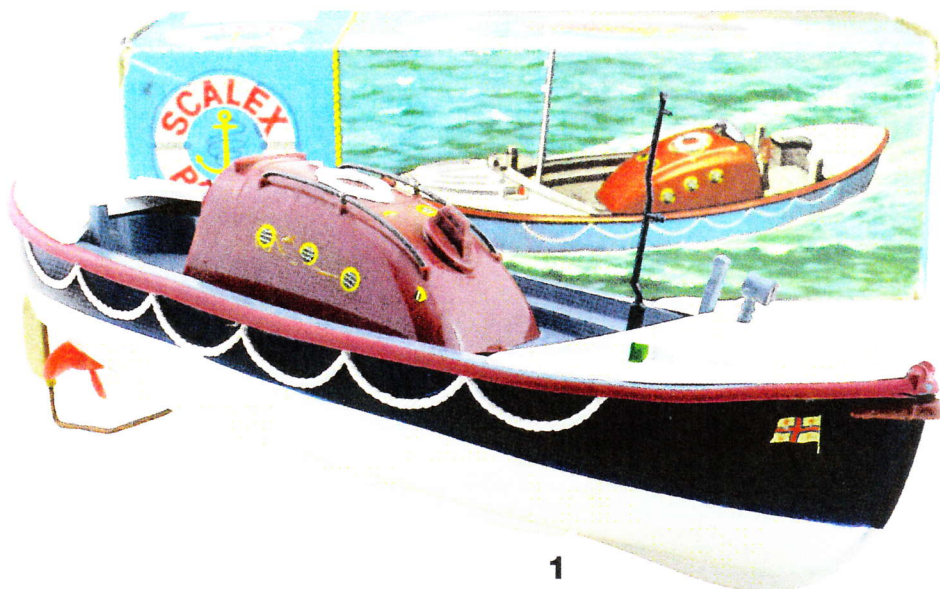


NEVER TURN BACK



John Tailby looks at the history of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the diecast models of the rescue vehicles they use.

Flooding seems to be an annual event in various parts of our country, turning roads and streets into rivers and causing great distress to all those affected. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution tries to alleviate this suffering as much as possible by providing boats to rescue people from danger. The lifeboat service relies on donations to carry out its work and one source of funds comes from the sale of merchandise including model boats.

Corgi Toys have produced a Land Rover, Trailer and Flood Rescue Boat set which is available from RNLI shops and also from sponsors, Tool Station outlets. Each has slightly different packaging. These are lovely little die cast sets measuring five inches long. I have one of each in my collection and the Lifeboat depicted is an RNLI 'D' Class.

I remember my first Lifeboat model, which was bought for me whilst on holiday with my parents in Cromer, Norfolk in the 1950's. It was a Triang plastic boat with a clockwork motor. I have had a long association with Cromer and its neighbouring town of Sheringham, having spent many enjoyable holidays there and have been inspired by local history of crab and lobster fishing with small boats and of course by the history of saving lives at sea since 1824, when the RNLI was formed.

For the first 80 years of the RNLI, the only form of power for lifeboats was the muscle of the men and the wind. After being brought to the sea by horses, oars and sails took the lifeboats on their missions and incredible rescues were carried out usually quite close to the shore.

The lifeboat men of the 19th Century were nearly all fishermen and their strength and hardiness came from working every day in their fishing boats. The pulling and sailing lifeboats were replaced with petrol then diesel driven boats from the start of the 20th Century. Today lifeboats are all driven by twin



1 Triang (Scalex) Lifeboat is a replica of the Liverpool type motor lifeboat.

▲ White metal kit of the Oakley Class Lifeboat by D.M. Castings of Huddersfield.



▲ D.M.Castings were supposed to have created more white metal kits for the RNLI but went out of business.



▲ Lledo made the first diecast RNLI Lifeboat models in association with Kimberly-Clark, makers of Kleenex.

diesel engines. Crewed by volunteers, they are able to respond to all types of emergencies. Every year on Lifeboat Day, the latest boats are launched and demonstrated, always attracting a large crowd.

"Never Turn Back" has been the unspoken motto of the lifeboat service since 1901 when the Caister (Norfolk) lifeboat capsized near to the shore killing nine of her crew. At the inquest it was said that, "Caister men never turn back."

Cromer was home to the greatest lifeboat man that ever lived, Henry Blogg G.C.B.E.M, who was coxswain of the lifeboat from 1909 to 1947, winner of three RNLI gold medals for conspicuous gallantry and four silver medals. His memory is kept alive at Cromer Lifeboat museum where his fearless leadership of the crews rescuing 873 lives at sea is well recorded. Both Cromer and Sheringham museums have a fascinating collection of old lifeboats and related items. An artist was commissioned to paint pictures of the lifeboats on the sea wall at Sheringham.

I have built a white metal kit of an early pulling (rowing) and sailing lifeboat by D&M Castings of Huddersfield. The company dated from the 1970's



and was commissioned to make a range of lifeboats for the RNLI, with one new model every six months, creating the entire fleet past and present. Unfortunately the company ceased trading at some point due to financial difficulties. Number LB5 in the range is the Pulling and Sailing Lifeboat complete with horse drawn carriage. The whole outfit is approximately nine inches long with a 1/2 scale picture on the box. Information included in the assembly instructions gives the following details of others produced: LB1 Waveney Lifeboat, LB2 Oakley Lifeboat, LB3 Case Tractor and Carriage for LB2, LB4 Atlantic 21 and D Class lifeboats.

I don't remember what happened to my first Triang model lifeboat. I remember playing with it on the beach and I think that salt water got into the clockwork motor and rusted it. This must have happened to most of them, because they are now very rare. Although a toy, it was a fairly accurate replica of the Liverpool type motor lifeboat and there is an example in the museum. I was lucky enough to see another one at a toy fair a few years ago, complete with its box and key etc. As it is now very collectable it cost £75. The original price written on the cardboard box was 15 shillings, which converts to 75p. This model from the 1950's is 10 inches long, made of plastic with metal rudder, clockwork motor and key. It is wound up through a hole in the deck, which has a plastic sealing bung.

The 'Liverpool' type lifeboat was used at both Cromer and Sheringham between 1936 and 1961. This 35 foot long boat had a 35hp petrol engine, housed in a watertight compartment. It was capable of 7.3 knots and a range of 60 nautical miles. It also carried sails in case of engine failure.

Next came the 'Oakley' Class Self Righting Lifeboat, introduced in 1958. It had a length of 37 feet. Powered by a 43 hp. Perkins Diesel engine, a max' speed of 8 knots and a range of 165 nautical miles could be achieved. Later versions were fitted with 2 x 52 hp Thornycroft diesels.

Oakley type boats were used at Sheringham between 1961 and 1992 and at Cromer between 1964 and 1985. Cromer boats were launched from a shipway at the end of the pier adjoining the boathouse. Sheringham boats were pulled from the boathouse onto a turntable and then pushed into the water using a waterproof tractor and carriage.

D.M Castings, mentioned earlier, made a white metal kit of the Oakley Lifeboat, which was LB2. I was lucky enough to see one at a toy fair along with

'Never turn back' has been the unspoken motto of the lifeboat service since 1901 when the Caister lifeboat capsized. At the inquest it was said that "Caister men never turn back"

LB5. I am still looking for LB3, which is the tractor and carriage. Oakley model is four and half inches long with a 1/2 scale picture on the box.

Lledo joined forces with Kimberly-Clark to produce a model of the 1982 Tyne Class lifeboat. This was not only the first ever diecast model lifeboat produced for the RNLI but was the first non-wheeled model ever produced by Lledo. Kimberly-Clark, makers of Kleenex products, had a long association with the RNLI and had been involved with fundraising all over Britain.

I purchased a model with a white hull bearing the name RNLI Garside St Davids, finished in RNLI colours of orange, blue and white. This four inch long model has a black plastic mast that can be raised or lowered. It has its own stand inside the packaging with clear plastic window. At a later date on a visit to Sheringham RNLI shop I saw one with a red hull named Sam and Joan Woods. This was the name of an actual boat used at Cromer between 1985 and 1996. A number of Lledo RNLI promotional vans were produced at the same time as the lifeboat.

It was now RNLI policy to name boats after rivers and the Tyne class was a fast shipway launched boat with a top speed of approximately 18 knots with

2



3



4



5



Lledo promotional vans: 2 1934 Dennis Parcel Van depicts much older livery 3 cute little Austin A30 van has superb proportions and moulding detail 4 VW Split Screen Type2 mini bus is an unusual inclusion 5 1912 Renault Van looks smart, but not very authentic, in RNLI livery.



▲ Atlantic 75 model is a beautifully detailed radio controlled craft by Impact International and came in this impressive diorama-style box.

► Huge, radio controlled Impact International model is of the Severn Class lifeboat. Scale is not known, but it measures 18 inches long and 11 inches high.



power from twin 425hp General Motors diesel engines. The Tyne class hull and powerful engines made it twice as fast as the Oakley type it replaced.

The information on the packaging explained that boats with white hulls are kept out of the water in Lifeboat houses and are slipway launched. Boats with red hulls are normally kept in the water and are painted with a red anti-fouling coating. Tyne class boats were used at Cromer until 2008 when they were replaced by the latest 'Tamar' class.

Tamar class boats are 16.3 metres long and are powered by twin six-cylinder, 18-litre 'Cat' C18 marine diesel engines, giving 1015 bhp. They are capable of 25 knots with good acceleration and fuel economy. They also carry a 'daughter inflatable boat' in the stern for inshore rescues. This type of boat is still in use at Cromer and is slipway launched from the boathouse at the end of the pier.

Model makers seem to have bypassed the Tamar but at least two different models are available of the largest lifeboat in the RNLI fleet the 17.3 metre Severn Class. This has a top speed of 25 knots and a range of 250 nautical miles. It is designed to lie afloat and carries an inflatable Y boat powered by an outboard motor which is launched using a hydraulic crane. It has a similar shape to the Tamar and the same power source.

The 2007 Airfix catalogue displays a fine picture on its front cover of the Severn Class, more details are given inside of the 1/72 scale kits. Two kits were available: one with the boat only and the other with lifeboat and Sea King Helicopter, called the Air Sea Rescue kit. Plenty here to keep the model makers busy and £1 from the original sale price is paid in support of the RNLI.

I must admit that I haven't made the kits but instead bought a wonderful radio controlled example by Impact International. This is a well-detailed plastic model at 18 inches long and 11 inches high. Although I bought it second hand it was in perfect condition.

The same applies to a Radio Controlled model of the Atlantic 75 by the same maker, which I acquired at the same time. This is six inches long in an attractive box. This Atlantic 75 is a replica of the type introduced at Sheringham in 1994 as



▲ Airfix offered model kits of the Severn Class Lifeboat in 1/72 scale, including one with a rescue helicopter.



▲ Cararama Atlantic inshore lifeboat came on a trailer towed by a Range Rover.



▲ Corgi Premium diecast model of the Shannon lifeboat. This is available from Corgi and in RNLI shops.

a replacement for its Atlantic 21. At 24 feet long, it is powered by twin 70 hp outboard motors and capable of 30 knots. It is self-righting by means of an inflatable buoyancy tank and is launched by a new Talus launching tractor with a 4.4 litre Caterpillar engine. Sheringham's current lifeboat since 2007 is an Atlantic 85.

Cararama made a die cast/plastic model of the Atlantic inshore lifeboat mounted on a trailer and towed by an RNLI Range Rover. This was a reasonably priced, well-packaged model in the Junior Rescue range. The Range Rover is two and three quarter inches long and the boat on the trailer is four inches long.

The very latest development in lifeboat design uses cutting edge technology to meet the demands of the 21st Century. Shannon is the latest class of all-weather boats propelled by water jets instead of traditional propellers. At 13 meters long and weighing 18 tons, it is the most agile and manoeuvrable lifeboat yet with a top speed of 25 knots. It can lie afloat or be launched and recover from a beach. A new tractor-borne carriage allows safer and faster launch and recovery times. The boat is recovered bow first, and then a turntable in the carriage rotates ready for the next launch.

Corgi premium range has recently made a four inch long diecast model of the Shannon, which is available from RNLI shops and website. It was reviewed in November 2015 edition of *Diecast Collector*. This is a good model with its own stand but with no information about the real thing! It is however, possible to find more information on the RNLI website. **DC**

FURTHER READING

I still like old-fashioned books and listed below some which I have enjoyed reading. At least £1 from the original sale price of the books went to the RNLI:

- *Cromer Lifeboats 2008, A Pictorial History*. Landmark Collectors Library
- *Sheringham Lifeboats 2009 A Pictorial History*. Landmark Collectors Library
- *The Lifeboat. Courage on Our Coasts 2014*, Nigel Millard. Conway Publishing.
- *Never Turn Back – The RNLI Since the Second World War*, Ray and Susannah Kipling. Sutton Publishing 2006
- *A Source Book of Lifeboats*, Ray Kipling. Ward Lock 1982
- *Riders of the Storm – The Story of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution*, Ian Cameron. The Orion Publishing Company 2002.