



## **Annual Report 2024-25**



**SUPPORTING THE SEAFARING COMMUNITY  
FOR 186 YEARS**

# The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society *in numbers*



The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society was founded in

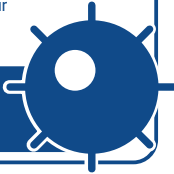
# 1839

as a result of the tragic loss of a fleet of fishing boats out of Clovelly on the north Devon coast the year before and has been providing financial support to mariners ever since

In 2024/25, the Society received  
**public donations**  
of over **£208,000**

including over **£4,000** from 16 of our ex-WW11 large mines, converted to Charity collection boxes

The Society has around **50 collection mines** in operation on the coastlines for supporters and passers-by to donate to the Charity



The Society has had **SIX** patrons over its history



the first being Queen Victoria and the current being HRH The Princess Royal

The Society has had  
**18 presidents over the years**

In 1839, its first president was Admiral The Rt. Hon. Sir George Cockburn GCB, who was involved in the occupation of Washington and the burning of the White House in 1814 during the war with the United States



The Society runs an annual photography competition and **twelve** competitions have been launched so far, with over

**10,000**  
entries received to date



**2,042**  
entries

Annually, the Society secures around

# 500

 pieces

of coverage across national, regional, radio, trade, online and offline coverage



Annually, the Society provides around

# 1,250 individuals/families

with regular grant payments at a cost of

# £1 million

It also provides approx. 700 one-off grants at a further cost of £340,000



- Last year the Society handled nearly **900 new applications** for assistance
- The Society takes on over 100 **plus new regular beneficiaries** each year

Each year, the Society has over

# 20,000

visits to its website



Legacy donations in 2024/25 totalled

# £587,000



From 1851 the Society operated **8 lifeboats**, but it was subsequently agreed that one organisation should concentrate on saving lives at sea, while the other would focus on 'saving' lives ashore. In 1854, the Society transferred its lifeboats to the...



# Lifeboats

In 2020, the Society saw the **highest ever amount of submissions** to the photography competition, with

The Society operates through a national volunteer network of over

# 100

 Honorary Agents



## The Society's Purpose

**The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society** provides financial help to merchant seafarers, fishermen and their dependants who are in need. We pay an immediate grant to the widow of a serving seafarer who dies, whether death occurs at sea or ashore. Regular grants are paid to former seafarers, their widows and partners, whose circumstances justify on-going support. Special grants are made to meet particular needs in crisis situations. We also make funeral grants. Practical assistance is given to seafarers of any nationality shipwrecked on the coast of the British Isles.



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## Our Patron HRH The Princess Royal



**Founded in 1839** the Society was granted Royal Patronage with Queen Victoria becoming our first Patron; this has continued to the present day and we are delighted HRH The Princess Royal is our current Patron.

# Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners' Royal Benevolent Society

(Shipwrecked Mariners' Society) Instituted 1839, incorporated 1850 and registered under the Charities Act 1960. Registered charity no.212034

## Patron

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal

## President

Admiral Sir George Zambellas GCB DSC ADC DL FRAeS

## Vice-Presidents

The Rt Hon Lord Brabazon of Tara PC DL, Mr Anthony West DL, Mr William D Everard CBE

## Ex-officio Vice-Presidents

|                                             |                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| H E The Lt-Governor of the Isle of Man      | The Lord Provost of Dundee                                |
| H E The Lt-Governor of Jersey               | The Lord Mayor of Kingston upon Hull                      |
| H E The Lt-Governor of Guernsey             | The Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne                     |
| The Right Hon The Lord Mayor of London      | The Lord Mayor of Plymouth                                |
| The Right Hon The Lord Provost of Edinburgh | The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth                              |
| The Right Hon The Lord Provost of Glasgow   | The Prime Warden of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers |
| The Right Hon The Lord Mayor of Belfast     | The Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners   |
| The Right Hon The Lord Mayor of Cardiff     |                                                           |
| The Lord Provost of Aberdeen                |                                                           |
| The Lord Mayor of Birmingham                | The Deputy Master of Trinity House                        |

## Council (Trustees)

**Chair:** Commander Andrea Crook RN\*

**Deputy Chair:** Commodore Mike Mansergh CBE DL RN\*

**Treasurer:** Mr William Plant FCA\*

*\*Executive Committee Members*

|                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Capt Roger Barker MNM FNI* | Capt Graham Pepper FNI*      |
| Miss Ruth Charles          | Mrs Elizabeth Price          |
| Mr Tony Delahunty          | Mr Michael Seymour           |
| Mrs Alison Harris*         | Capt John Vercoe FNI         |
| Mr Rob Jardine-Brown       | Mr Tim West                  |
| Capt Nigel Palmer OBE MNM  | Cdre Toby Williamson MVO RN* |

**Bankers:** CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

- The Royal Bank of Scotland plc, 36 St Andrews Square. Edinburgh EH2 2YB

**Solicitors:** George Ide LLP, 52 North Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1NQ

- Blake Morgan, New Kings Court, Tollgate, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh SO53 3LG

**Investment Advisers:** Sarasin & Partners LLP, Juxon House 100 St. Paul's Churchyard, London EC4M 8BU

**Auditors:** Lewis Brownlee (Chichester) Ltd, Chartered Accountants, Appledram Barns, Birdham Road, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 7EQ

**Chief Executive:** Captain Justin Osmond Royal Navy





## Where We Are



**The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society** helps people from all over the British Isles from its main headquarters in Chichester, West Sussex, and through a national volunteer network of over 100 Honorary Agents. It should be noted that many of the Honorary Agents shown on this map provide caseworking support across wide geographical areas of the UK (rather than simply at the location shown). We also receive significant support from SSAFA caseworkers, who provide caseworking services across all regions of the UK. The Society also has an Honorary Agent and a few beneficiaries in Malta.

## Chair's Report

On behalf of my fellow Trustees, in this our 186th year, I am delighted to provide an update on the Society's work providing essential support to seafarers, and their families, who are in need. As you will be aware, the last year has been an anxious time for people on low incomes, in many cases resulting from changes to the welfare system, including loss of the Winter Fuel Payment for some pensioners, as well as uncertainty over future welfare reforms.



We have therefore continued to provide significant levels of support to uphold the welfare of seafarers and their families, and our one-off grant applications rose by 10%, reaching similar levels to those seen during the COVID crisis. Applications for regular grants have stayed at the same level as last year, albeit noting that this remains 30% higher than the recent long-term average. These numbers are indicative of the ongoing pressure placed on the many seafarers, former seafarers and their families, who are struggling to live on their limited income.

In terms of headline figures, over the course of the last year, we have:

- **Made regular grant payments to 1,236 people at a cost of £1.1 million.**
- **Handled 885 new applications for assistance.**
- **Taken on 125 new regular beneficiaries.**
- **Made one-off or crisis grants to 783 people, at a cost of £327,000.**

Our total expenditure was £2.2 million, of which 88% was spent on charitable activities. With incoming resources of £1.6M we had an operating deficit of £602,000, which is in line with our long-term financial strategy which remains to reduce our long-term investment holdings in line with the forecast reduction in seafarer numbers. We plan to halve the real term value of our investments by 2050, thereby matching our spending power with the size of the beneficiary population and ensuring our ability to support those in need, both now and in the future.

Donations from our amazing supporters, including into our large collecting mines and in response to our appeals, totalled £208,000 which continues to highlight the remarkable generosity of those who support our work. We must also recognise our reliance on the support of our two major grant funders, Trinity House and The Seafarers Charity, without whom we would be unable to maintain the level of support we provide and to whom we are most grateful.

In conducting our work, it is also important to acknowledge that we do not work alone; we regularly draw on our extremely close relationships with many of our partners, including The Fishermen's Mission, Seafarers' Hospital Society, Sailor's Children's Society, Sailors Advice and Information Line, Nautilus Welfare and SSAFA, to deliver much needed support to those in need. These relationships have wide ranging benefits for our collective beneficiaries. As an example I would like to highlight our routine work with SAIL which has driven a marked reduction in the severity of debt related problems we have to fund and is testament to our combined approach, focusing on early engagement where such issues are identified and strong support for bringing personal finances under control.

## Chair's Report - Continued

With regards to the future, we have recently completed our 5-year strategy review. Our long-term objectives remain firmly focused on the enduring task of helping fishermen and mariners in financial need. As part of this we are reinforcing our commitment to find better ways to support working mariners, noting this work is already underway following the introduction of a new grant aimed at tackling the issue of appliance poverty. Appliance poverty leaves nearly 2 million households across the UK without one or more essential household appliances, leading to financial, physical and emotional distress for millions of parents and children. Our strategy discussions also focused on the forecast reduction in seafarer numbers in the decades ahead and the need to ensure the collective network of support organisations are working as collaboratively as possible to deliver coherent, effective and efficient support to those in need.

All of the work I have mentioned relies on a wide range of people, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Trustees for their commitment to the work of the Charity, in particular Captain John Vercoe, who is standing down after 14 years as a Trustee, including 12 years on the Executive Committee and to Captain Graham Pepper, who is standing down after 13 years, including 9 years on the Executive Committee. Thank you for your dedicated service to the Society - we wish you all the very best for the future. I would also like to thank the Central Office staff in Chichester without whose skills, dedication and enthusiasm the Charity would not run.

**Andrea Crook**



## Chief Executive's Report

As the Chair has already highlighted, it has been a busy year for grant applications, in particular for one-off grants, including a new grant to ensure our that our low-income pensioners weren't adversely affected by the government's decision to withdraw the Winter Fuel Payment from those who desperately need it. As an organisation that seeks to respond quickly to emerging events, I'm pleased to report that we took the important decision to provide a replacement grant for all those who were at risk of going cold through the last winter, but even more pleased that

the government has now reversed its previous decision which will avoid us having to do the same next winter. With regards to regular grants, I'm pleased to report that Trustees recently took the important decision to raise the level of this grant by £1 per week, meaning it now provides £936 of additional income to help meet the ever-rising costs of food, fuel, council tax and other day to day essentials. More generally this represents the 3rd increase in 4 years, reflecting a 20% increase in the level of our grant since Mar 2022, which hopefully goes some way to helping our beneficiaries keep their heads above the water.

Turning to more internal matters, it has been another successful year for our trading activity, which remains a key pillar of our fundraising efforts. Whilst sales volumes are continuing to reduce, driven by individuals sending fewer cards, I'm pleased to report that the number of people buying cards has remained constant.

Those people continue to demonstrate outstanding generosity, with over £116,000 donated during the year. This income, alongside an average of £180,000 each year received in legacies from card buyers, clearly demonstrates the value of our trading activity in generating funds for the Society's work. In addition, we received further public donations of over £92,000, which includes donations into our large collecting mines. Special thanks are due to those Honorary Agents who look after them so well despite the ravages of time, sea, air and (occasionally) theft and vandalism.



Our annual photographic competition, now in its thirteenth year, is designed to celebrate our enduring relationship with the sea. The competition attracted 963 entries and the winning image *"Standing on the Shoulders of Giants - to get the Ultimate Sea View!"* was taken at Folkestone Harbour by David Stearne. My thanks

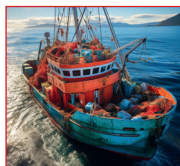
to our expert panel of judges: Picture Editor of the i, Sophie Batterbury and former Sunday Times Picture Editor, Ray Wells.

Our Honorary Agents are central to what we do, whether it is casework, fundraising or simply acting as a representative and spreading the word about us. Our heartfelt thanks go to all those who serve in this way, but I would also like to add my personal thanks to those organisations working alongside us on a day-to-day basis. I believe our collective beneficiaries are well served by the wide and diverse range of support organisations across the sector and I look forward to further continuing our joint work for many years to come.

Looking forward, there is much to be done in the coming year. As our Chair has already covered, we will be investigating how we can do more to support working age seafarers, which includes our recent initiative to tackle the issue of Appliance Poverty. This issue leaves nearly 2 million households across the UK without one or more essential appliances (washing machine, fridge, cooker etc), leading to significant financial, physical and emotional distress for millions of parents and children. We are hopeful that our new grant, which is specifically aimed at families in receipt of Universal Credit, will help alleviate this distress. Looking ahead, we also hope to work closely with the Fishermen's Mission team on the broader issue of support to working age seafarers, drawing on their front-line knowledge and experience to better understand the challenges which workers and their families face, and see what more we can do to help.

And finally, none of this would be possible without the efforts of my fellow staff members in Head Office and I would like to thank the entire team of Alison, Sam, Sami, Stephen and Sylvia for their unwavering support and unswerving commitment to seafarers and their families.

**Justin Osmond**

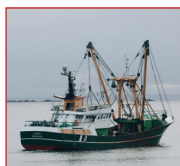


## The Support We Provide

The Society fulfils its charitable objectives primarily through a variety of grants: Regular; Special or one-off; Immediate; Death Benefit (to former Life members), Funeral and Shipwreck.

The **REGULAR GRANT** is important for the following reasons:

- It is a significant proportionate increase in a beneficiary's income, aids budgeting and helps recipients avoid arrears or going into debt.
- It establishes an on-going relationship between ourselves through the local Honorary Agent with the beneficiary which is more than just financial and which can be particularly important to those who live alone.
- Annual events in key ports enable our Honorary Agents to see beneficiaries face-to-face at least once a year and to discuss financial and other matters.
- The associated three-yearly reviews provide an opportunity to find out if additional assistance is required.
- It is the recipient's decision as to how the grant is spent.



The **SPECIAL or ONE-OFF/CRISIS GRANT** enables the recipient among other things to:

- Purchase and replace defective white goods and other items such as beds and carpets.
- Remain mobile within the home, for example, through the installation of a stairlift.
- Make adaptations to deal with infirmities and disabilities, for example, to replace a bath with a walk-in shower, or provide a riser / recliner chair, thereby enabling them to remain independent at home.
- Get out of their homes without assistance or with reduced assistance through improved mobility, for example, by providing an electrically powered vehicle.
- Cover the cost of private occupational therapist (OT) reports connected with the above.
- Pay for essential household repairs, for example, to tackle damp problems, replace doors and windows thereby helping them to remain in their own homes.
- Pay for heating, pay off priority debts (eg. utility bills and Council Tax).
- Buy clothes and shoes.
- Take a rare holiday.





## The Impact that it has

Below are some examples of the support we have provided over the course of the year, as well as some of the thank-you messages we have received following grant awards.

Mr S, in his early 30s with 14 years sea service, **was forced to flee home (with his daughter) having been targeted by criminal gangs.** With no choice but to sofa surf, they were becoming increasingly desperate and approached one of our Honorary Agent's for support. Working with another charity **we were able to provide the deposit and first month's rent for a flat, which enabled them to find a new home and start rebuilding their lives.**

"I want to thank you once again for my grant, especially as **my wife is suffering from Alzheimer's and this has helped greatly in making her life a little better. You do an amazing job. God bless."**

Thank you so much for helping me with **a grant to replace my winter fuel payment. I really don't know how I'd have kept my home warm without this extra help.** Thank you once again for all that you do."

Mr R, in his early 60s with 37 years sea service, suffered an accident whilst at sea. The resulting injuries ended his career and left him with very significant mobility issues. **The Council eventually awarded him a Disabled Facilities Grant to convert his home but asked him to contribute over £3,000 towards the costs. With no savings and a very low income, we worked with another charity to provide the required funds.**

"I'm writing to **thank you so very much for the grant** which arrived today. As always seems to be the case, it's come at just the right time as I've needed a specialist mattress for my bed for some time and will now be able to get one sorted. Again, thank you. **Your kindness and generosity is beyond appreciated."**

"My wife and I would like to say **a huge thank you for your help in providing us with a stairlift.** It's made such a difference to our lives - I don't know how we'd have coped without your support."

Mr W, in his early 50s with 25 years sea service, developed severe breathing difficulties which left him unable to work. As a single parent with very limited income, he and his young daughter have lived for many years in a one-bedroom property, with him sleeping on the sofa. **He was eventually offered a 2-bed property, but noting he had no savings, we were able to provide a setting up home grant to help him furnish the property.**

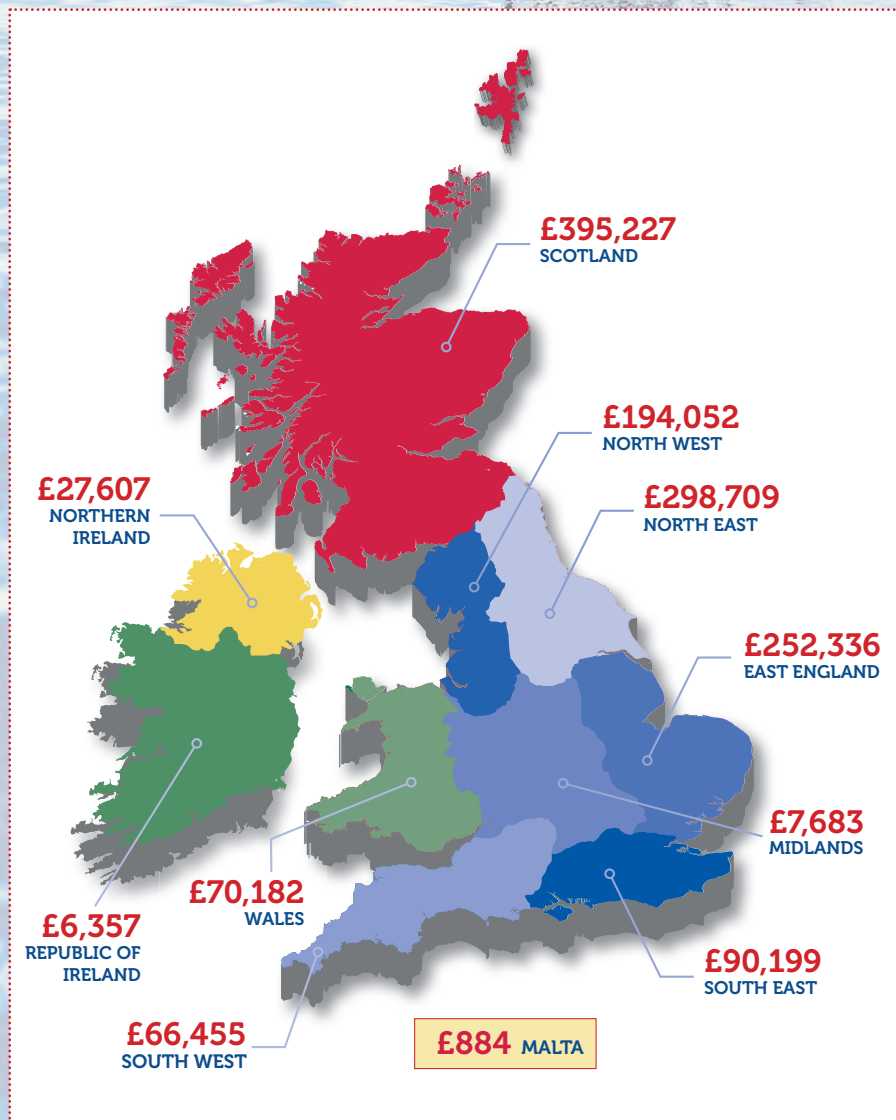
Mrs K, a widow in her late 90s, was living independently in her own home but **needed significant repairs to her roof. Unfortunately, she was tricked by rogue traders, who walked away without completing the repairs. With no money remaining and with winter fast approaching we were able to provide funds to ensure the work was quickly rectified by a reputable builder.**





## Regional Grant Expenditure

**£1,409,691** TOTAL GRANT EXPENDITURE FY24/25



# Financial Review

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting & Reporting by Charities (SORP) 2015 (FRS 102).



## Principal Sources Of Income

**Overview:** Total Income (including investment income) for 2024/25 was £1.6 million with expenditure of £2.2 million, giving an operating deficit of £602,000. This compares to a deficit of £865,000 in the previous year. In the long term the Trustees budget for an operating deficit but plan for this to be partially offset by income from investments and gains on investment assets. Overall net expenditure (after investment gains) was £19,000 compared to a net income of £1.1 million last year. It should however be noted that Trustees expect this figure to be subject to large variations due to the nature of its investment holdings.

**Investments:** Investments generate income that is key to supporting our beneficiaries. This year the value of our investments has reduced by approx. £150,000 to £28.6 million. A total return (TR) policy is operated which requires the investment managers to fund our budgeted yearly operating deficit from a combination of income and capital: we drew down a total of 4.0% of our investments (income and capital) during 2024/25. This aligns with our actuarial model and represents a sustainable level of expenditure to meet beneficiary needs both now and in the future. Investment performance is reviewed bi-annually by the Investment Committee, which provides additional oversight alongside the separate bi-annual reviews undertaken by Council. The Society's Investment strategy remains unchanged and involves maintaining a moderate level of short-term investments (cash or near-cash) alongside a long-term investment fund with a greater focus on equities. The cash portfolio exists to enable the Society to continue its operations following a major stock market crash, noting the nature of equity-based investing means these will inevitably occur and should be considered routine. The value of the cash holding is set at a level to ensure uninterrupted operations following a (worst case) 30% fall in stock market value. Such funds would enable the Society to maintain expenditure levels for (up to) 5 years without having to sell depreciated holdings, and whilst the market recovers to its original level. Trustees believe this will provide a better long-term return on its investments, whilst also enabling the Society to continue its operation during inevitable periods of stock market turbulence.

**Legacies:** Receipts this year were £587k, up from £268k last year and well above the long-term average of £275k. Of note, Trustees fully expect significant year-on year variation in such receipts and use the long-term average to aid financial planning. However, irrespective of the sum received we remain enormously grateful to those who chose to support us in this way; such gifts are put to good use helping the next generation of seafarers and their dependants. Legacies are a vital but inherently unpredictable source of income.

**Donations / Fundraising:** Public donations from appeals (see Trading below), direct to Central Office and through our Agencies, which includes our collecting mines, amounted to £208,000, which whilst down on the exceptional levels seen during both the COVID and cost-of-living crises, remains in line with our long-term expectations. We are most appreciative of the generosity of those who support us in this way.



**Grants:** We have a very close relationship with two key charities, namely Trinity House London and The Seafarers Charity, both of whom have a long history of generous support for our work. The annual grants we receive from them are essential to our work and we maintain a close dialogue with both organisations.

**Trading:** This has been another good year for our trading activity, which remains focused on selling Christmas, Birthday, and correspondence cards via mail order, online and through our supplier, Impress Publishing. Additional sales come via our seasonal shop at Central Office. Whilst turnover at £62,000 was very slightly down on last year, reflecting the general reduction in Christmas card sales across the UK, the number of supporters buying our cards remained at the same level (albeit the number of cards they bought was reduced). Of note our trading model does not seek to make significant profit from card sales, as we are incredibly fortunate that those who buy our cards tend to support us (throughout the year) with generous donations. This is reflected in the £116,000 worth of appeal related donations which we received over the last year. This once again demonstrates the value of our trading activity in generating funds for the Society's work, whilst also providing numerous opportunities to advertise our work to the wider public. Our card buyers are our greatest group of supporters and have remained as loyal and generous as ever. Some of these supporters have been buying our cards for over 50 years, which is an amazing testimony to their steadfast support of our work.

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## Expenditure

**Costs of Raising Funds:** These relate largely to the cost of the annual Appeal and wider publicity throughout the year which is aimed at both potential donors and those who might refer potential beneficiaries to us for assistance.

**Charitable Activities:** Charitable Activities amounted to £1.96 million, which was 88% of all expenditure. Of this figure £1.41 million (63% of all expenditure) was on grants to individuals. The Society works extremely hard to minimise fundraising and support costs, thereby maximising the proportion of funds spent on charitable activities and delivering the maximum level of financial support directly to our beneficiaries.

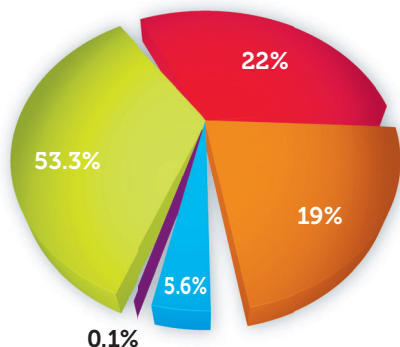
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## Reserves Policy And Designated Funds

The Trustees aim to maintain sufficient funds as investments in order to generate the income required to carry out the purpose of the Charity both now and in the longer term. Without this the Society would be unable to respond to need to the extent that it does or would have to increase its fundraising activities and associated expenditure, and in so doing be largely competing with other charities in the maritime sector. The Society conducts an annual review of its long-term finances using an actuarial model based on a range of future scenarios. In essence this enables Trustees to determine whether we will have sufficient financial resources to meet projected future demands, based on estimated returns from our investments alongside our annual fundraising activity. The results of this year's review confirmed that the Society's finances remain robust.



## Summary Income & Expenditure Account



### Incoming Resources

|                | 2025             | 2024           |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Donations      | 208,366          | 236,865        |
| Legacies       | 587,273          | 267,883        |
| Grants         | 237,568          | 212,252        |
| Other          | 810              | 930            |
| Trading Income | 61,810           | 63,160         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1,095,827</b> | <b>781,090</b> |

### Resources Expended

|               | 2025    | 2024    |
|---------------|---------|---------|
| Raising Funds | 271,370 | 265,111 |

### Charitable Activity

|             |           |           |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Grants      | 1,409,691 | 1,426,998 |
| Other Costs | 549,834   | 528,483   |

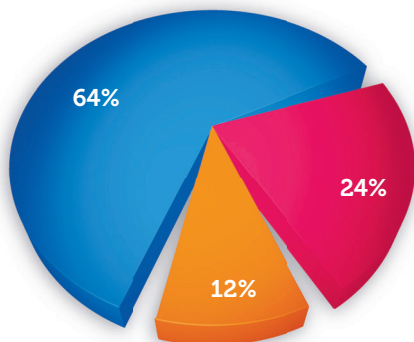
### Total Resources

|          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Expended | 2,230,895 | 2,220,592 |
|----------|-----------|-----------|

|                   |             |             |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Operating Deficit | (1,135,068) | (1,439,502) |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|

### Net Income/(Expenditure)

|                              |          |           |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Including Investment Returns | (19,023) | 1,078,252 |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------|



## Summary Balance Sheet

|                           | 2025              | 2024              |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Fixed Assets</b>       |                   |                   |
| Tangible Fixed Assets     | 7,553             | 11,791            |
| Investments               | 28,640,592        | 28,795,516        |
| Investment Property       | 1,110,000         | 1,110,000         |
| <b>Net Current Assets</b> | <b>727,988</b>    | <b>587,849</b>    |
| <b>Net Assets</b>         | <b>30,486,133</b> | <b>30,505,156</b> |

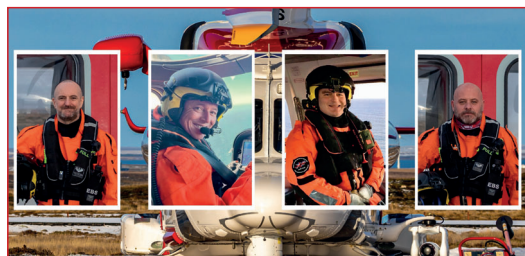




## Awards for Skill and Gallantry

### The Edward And Maisie Lewis Award

#### For an Outstanding Air/Sea Rescue



**The attempted long-range rescue of the crew of the fishing vessel Argos Georgia, in force 9 conditions, demonstrated the highest standards of judgement, professionalism and crew co-operation, combined with outstanding courage.**

On the afternoon of Monday 22nd July 2024, the Falkland Island Maritime Authority (FIMA) started receiving reports that the 54m fishing vessel Argos Georgia was taking on water and requesting assistance. The vessel was reporting its location as 187nm east of Port Stanley Airport, which was at the very limits of the operating range of Rescue 1, the only Search and Rescue helicopter based in the Falklands. Given the extreme range and likelihood of needing to recover multiple casualties, the aircraft commander quickly directed all non-essential equipment to be stripped from the aircraft to reduce weight.

Following a detailed planning session, and having fuelled to the maximum, the aircraft headed directly east from Port Stanley airport, giving them approximately 20 minutes on task once they reached the vessel. Whilst in transit they received news from an on-scene RAF A400M transport aircraft that the vessel was sinking, and that 3 lifeboats, one only partially inflated, were in the water.

Once on scene, the crew noted that the conditions were horrendous, with nearly 30ft waves and wind speeds of 50+ knots. The vessel was listing at 50 degrees with only part of the stern out of the water. Due to the extreme pitching and rolling of the vessel, there was no feasible way of reaching anyone onboard, so the crew turned their attention to those who had already made their way into life rafts. Having established an 80ft hover over the partially inflated life raft, the crew made 3 perilous attempts to manoeuvre the winchman onboard, with the final attempt coming within 2-3 metres before the winchman was engulfed by a huge wave, emerging 5 seconds later having sustained injuries to his neck and shoulder.

With an injured winchman and only 5 minutes on task time remaining, it was apparent that a further attempt on the life raft wasn't viable. However, as the aircraft readied to depart the scene, the aircraft captain spotted a person floating in the water just ahead of Rescue 1. Despite their critical fuel state, it was agreed that the injured winchman would go out again on the wire and attempt to recover the casualty. Whilst they were rapidly able to reach the casualty, they were unresponsive as a strop was placed around them and despite the best efforts of the winchman and Winch Operator, they were unable to raise the casualty into the aircraft.

Now 2 minutes past their 'no-go' time, they reluctantly began their transit back to Port Stanley. On arrival it became clear that the worsening conditions on scene, together with further drift East of the life rafts, meant that another rescue attempt that night would not be feasible.

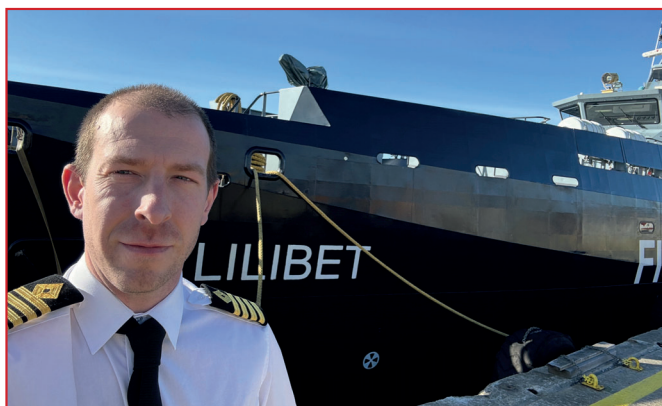
Overall, the crew demonstrated exceptional skill, determination and bravery in attempting to rescue the crew of Argos Georgia; they were all keenly aware from the outset that they would be operating at extreme range, with no back up available if anything went wrong, but despite this pushed themselves and their aircraft beyond normal limits in their attempts to save life. As such they are thoroughly deserving of this years Edward and Maisie Lewis award.

## The Emile Robin Award

### For the rescue of survivors in perilous conditions

**The rescue of 13 crew from the fishing vessel Argos Georgia, in force 9 conditions, demonstrated the highest standards of judgement, professionalism and crew co-operation, combined with outstanding courage.**

On the afternoon of Tuesday 22nd July 2024, the Fishery Patrol Vessel Lilibet, commanded by Captain Ben Blackburn, was sheltering in Port Egmont to the North of West Falkland, and was tasked to provide assistance to the fishing vessel Argos Georgia, which was in distress approximately 250 nm east of her position. As one of 3 vessels able to respond and despite the very challenging conditions, Lilibet rapidly made preparations for a rescue operation and made best speed towards the floundering vessel. The fishing vessel Robin Lee was the first on the scene and experienced winds of 75 knots and waves up to 30 ft in height. These conditions, combined with her high freeboard, resulted in significant difficulties getting alongside one of the life rafts, but she eventually managed to rescue 1 survivor. Arriving on scene a few hours later, Lilibet was diverted to the position of a second life raft by the RAF A400M which was patrolling overhead. Immediately focussing on recovering casualties, over the course of the next hour Lilibet rescued 13 survivors from inside the life raft.



Once safely on board, the SAR Mission Co-ordinator instructed the Lilibet to return to Port Stanley and seek medical assistance for the 13 survivors, leaving the 2 fishing vessels to conduct further searches with the assistance of the airborne assets. Lilibet arrived back in Port Stanley at 1447 on Thursday 24th July, having been on constant alert for 48 hours.

Captain Ben Blackburn displayed outstanding leadership and skill in taking the Fishery Patrol Vessel Lilibet some 250 nautical miles across the unforgiving South Atlantic Ocean in storm force winds and seas to affect the rescue of 13 survivors from the stricken fishing vessel Argos Georgia. This rescue over a period of 48 hours pushed him and his small crew to the limits of endurance yet throughout they remained professional and steadfast in their resolve to save the lives of fellow seafarers.

As such Capt Ben Blackburn has been selected as the 2025 recipient of the Emile Robin Award to recognise his outstanding skill, leadership and endurance in rescuing survivors from the sinking fishing vessel Argos Georgia.

# The Lady Swaythling Trophy

## For Outstanding Seamanship

**Outstanding preparedness, quick thinking and skilful seamanship saved the lives of the entire crew of the fishing vessel *Opportune* after she sank off the coast of the Shetland Islands.**



During the early hours of 24 March 2024, Ian Irvine, the skipper of FV *Opportune* was woken by the ship's mate to inform him that the fishing vessel's engine room was flooding. Ian immediately went to investigate, quickly discovering the engine room was filled with white smoke or steam. Skilfully assessing the situation, he quickly made the decision that it was unsafe for any of the crew to enter the space and attempt to stem the flood.

He immediately proceeded to the wheelhouse where he sounded the alarm and made an announcement for the crew to muster with their lifejackets. Concurrently he tasked the mate to activate the digital selective calling (DSC) alarm and transmit a Mayday call on the VHF radio.

However, during the VHF call the *Opportune* lost all power and began to roll heavily. With the crew now mustered, Ian directed the port 10-person life raft to be launched and once inflated ensured that the crew were able to board without entering the water. Whilst the crew boarded, Ian calmly ensured that a portable VHF radio, flares and *Opportune*'s electronic position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) were all transferred to the life raft.

However, as soon as the safety equipment was onboard, the life raft's painter was ripped from the mate's hand and the life raft began to drift away from the stricken vessel, leaving Ian and the mate onboard. Unperturbed, Ian launched and boarded the second (starboard) 10-person life raft, before cutting the painter and drifting clear of the fishing vessel. Ten minutes later the fishing vessel sank stern first. The crew were subsequently located by two search and rescue helicopters approximately an hour later and winched to safety.

Based on the report from the subsequent accident investigation, it is clear that the rapid foundering of this 24m steel fishing vessel was due to a very significant rate of water ingress. As such, the skipper's decision not to allow any of the crew to enter the engine room was extremely well judged and almost certainly prevented casualties. In addition, his actions in overseeing a textbook abandon ship evolution, in challenging sea conditions, helped ensure the crews' survival, as did his decision to use the automatic DSC alarm, in particular noting the VHF mayday call was never received by the coastguard. Overall, Ian's actions resulted in the swift rescue of the entire crew in what could otherwise have been a significant tragedy.

In summary Ian Irvine demonstrated exceptional seamanship and judgement in the face of a very serious and fast-moving emergency. As such his actions are wholly worthy of recognition as this year's winner of the Lady Swaythling Trophy.



## Crew Commendations

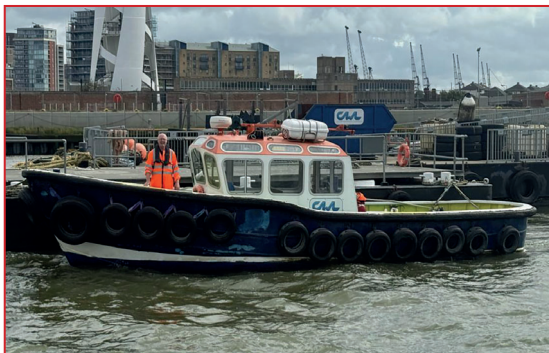
### For meritorious actions in rescuing others

#### Outstanding seamanship, including keen observation skills and quick reactions saved a casualty's life.

At 0545 on Tuesday 17th December 2024, skipper Tim Chivers and crewman Peter Hickman, of the workboat Malamute, were steaming up the River Thames close to Blackfriars bridge when despite the near total darkness 2 hours before sunrise, they spotted something on the south side of the river which simply didn't look right. They were both used to seeing lots of rubbish bags floating down the river, but something about the object looked wrong. They quickly decided to investigate and on approaching the object, it appeared to be a body floating face down in the water.

Tim quickly manoeuvred alongside and despite initial efforts to capture the body with a boat hook, the tide kept taking it away from them. They eventually manage to roll the body over and could see that it was a young woman who appeared to be alive. With the tide rapidly pushing the boat and the casualty towards the adjacent jetty, they once again managed to get alongside the woman and physically grab hold of her, together hauling her out of the freezing water and into the boat. Having successfully got her onto the deck of Malamute, Peter tended to the casualty whilst Tim contacted London port control and within minutes the local RNLI lifeboat arrived to provide medical support and take her to safety.

Overall, it is clear that Tim and Peter's outstanding observational skills, combined with their quick reactions, expert boat handling in challenging conditions and local knowledge saved the life of a young woman who would undoubtedly have perished had they not come to her aid. As such they are fully deserving of a Crew commendation for their selfless and hugely professional actions in saving the life of a young woman.



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#### Meticulous planning and outstanding airmanship, combined with obvious selflessness, resulted in the long-range rescue of 2 crew of a catamaran which was adrift in severe weather and at risk of breaking apart.

Whilst on a routine training mission on Thursday 4th July 2024, the crew of Coastguard Rescue 163 received a distress call regarding a yacht in distress off Newhaven Harbour. The crew promptly diverted to assist and upon arrival, observed a yacht which was anchored close to the harbour wall but being buffeted by very large rolling waves. The Newhaven lifeboat was already on scene, but unable to approach the vessel due to the severe conditions and proximity to the wall. The crew quickly commenced a rescue briefing, but in a dramatic turn of events, the yacht's anchor chain broke, causing it to drift very rapidly towards the seawall. As the vessel collided with the seawall it immediately began to break apart. The single yachtsman onboard was

## Crew Commendations - Continued

thrown across the cockpit and was clearly in immediate danger. With no time to spare, the crew deployed the Winch Paramedic to attempt a rescue, using skilful manoeuvring and exceptional crew co-operation to try and land the Winch Paramedic on the rapidly disintegrating vessel. Despite the extremely challenging conditions, and obvious danger to the winch paramedic, the crew made multiple attempts to place him onboard but were consistently hampered by the large waves battering the vessel. However, using the combined skills of the aircraft captain and his co-pilot, together with the Winch Operator, the Winch Paramedic was finally landed on the vessel.



In a remarkable display of bravery, resolve and strength, the Winch Paramedic, who was regularly being pounded by the relentless waves, managed to reach the casualty and pull him clear of the wreckage. With no time available to affix a harness, he had to rely on his physical grip whilst they were both lifted to the safety of the seawall and into the care of the awaiting Coastguard Team.

Overall, this rescue required a combination of courage, strength, stamina, pinpoint accuracy and exceptional crew co-operation to ensure the safety of a single yachtsman in a life-threatening situation. The crew of Rescue 163 demonstrated amazing dedication and operational excellence, working at the highest level in extremely difficult circumstances. As such they are fully deserving of a crew commendation for their outstanding actions.



### Professionalism, teamwork and adaptability resulted in the rescue of a yacht and all its crew.

At around 1300 on Sat 15 June, three Pac 24 Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs) crewed by Royal Navy Reservists were transiting back to HMNB Portsmouth when they heard a radio transmission from a yacht in distress. The yacht, called Wizard of ID, was adrift in the very busy shipping channel into Portsmouth harbour, with no power and with x1 casualty onboard.

The yacht was particularly concerned that they were being pushed towards the rocks near Clarence Pier, as the prevailing weather included wind speeds of 40+ knots combined with 2-to-3-metre swells. The RNR RHIBs didn't hesitate to assist and made best speed towards the yacht, arriving on scene less than a minute

## Crew Commendations - Continued

later. Working together in extremely difficult conditions, they focussed on embarking one of their crew onto the yacht to provide reassurance, tend to the casualty and help establish a tow, whilst also preventing the yacht from drifting closer to danger and ensuring other shipping in the vicinity kept clear. After some very difficult but efficient work by the boat crews, a tow was established, and the yacht was skilfully recovered into Portsmouth Harbour.

Whilst a seemingly simple recovery, this belies the conditions the RNR crews faced on the day, which required them to utilise their expert boat handling skills whilst coping with very strong winds and large swells. It also required significant dexterity and physical prowess to tackle the complex task of preparing for and then rigging a tow, whilst in the close confines of a RIB which was violently pitching and rolling throughout.

Overall, the RNR crews demonstrated the highest standards of seamanship, teamwork and adaptability to overcome an extremely demanding situation, thereby saving a yachtsman and his crew from imminent danger. As such they are fully deserving of a crew commendation for their outstanding efforts.



**Skill, professionalism, and exceptional stamina resulted in the rescue of 13 survivors from the sinking fishing vessel Argos Georgia.**

On the afternoon of Tuesday 22nd July 2024, the Fishery Patrol Vessel Lilibet was sheltering in Port Egmont to the North of West Falkland and was tasked to provide assistance to the fishing vessel Argos Georgia, which was in distress approximately 250 nm east of her position. Rapidly underway in very

challenging conditions, Lilibet's crew made detailed preparations for a rescue operation whilst making best speed towards the floundering vessel. Arriving on scene approximately 21 hours after the initial distress call, Lilibet was guided to one of Argos Georgia's life rafts by an RAF A400M which was patrolling overhead. Despite immediately focussing on recovering casualties, and despite the extremely challenging conditions, over the course of the next hour Lilibet rescued 13 survivors from inside the life raft.

Having recovered the casualties, the SAR Mission Co-ordinator instructed the Lilibet to return to Port Stanley and seek medical assistance for the 13 survivors, leaving 2 other fishing vessels to conduct further searches with the assistance of the airborne assets. Lilibet arrived back in Port Stanley at 1447 on Thursday 24th July, having been on constant alert for 48 hours.

The crew of FPV Lilibet displayed outstanding skill, stamina, dedication and teamwork and in transiting 250 nautical miles across the unforgiving South Atlantic Ocean, in storm force winds and seas, to affect the rescue of 13 survivors from the stricken fishing vessel Argos Georgia. As such they are thoroughly deserving of a commendation for their outstanding actions.



## The Lord Lewin Awards

### REBECCA AUSTIN

#### Caseworking - Grimsby

Rebecca has been an Honorary Agent in Grimsby since 2023, which she does as part of her wider role as the Mission Port Officer for The Fishermen's Mission. Despite her relatively short time in post, she has rapidly established herself as an effective and much valued caseworker, providing support across Grimsby and the surrounding area.



Working in one of our busiest locations for retired seafarers, and often operating under significant pressure, she has submitted numerous applications and reviews over the course of the last year, all of which have been completed to a very high standard. Her caseworking submissions are all extremely well written, containing all of the key information required to provide our grants team with a thorough understanding of the underlying need, as well as a clear indication of how we can help.

Always keen to further her knowledge, she has worked hard to understand the Society's underlying approach to grant giving, which has not only enabled her to better support us, but also her clients. Exceptionally professional in everything she does, she is thoroughly dedicated to those she supports and frequently goes the extra mile on their behalf. Overall, she is a credit to The Fishermen's Mission and is thoroughly deserving of an award to recognise her dedicated service and exceptional commitment to the maritime community.



### RICHARD AND LINDA SADLER

#### Fundraising – Tenby, Wales

Richard and Linda have been our Honorary Agents in Tenby for the last 6 years, having volunteered to take over management of their local mine. Having personally overhauled the mine in 2020, albeit with some expert support from the local RNLI mechanic, their work has ensured excellent donations, with an average of over £500 raised each year. Always open to new opportunities, during a visit to Holy Island in 2021 Richard noted that the local mine was in desperate need of attention and felt he should do something about it. It subsequently became clear that refurbishment was not a realistic option, but undaunted, and noting the close proximity to Grace

Darling's heroic rescue of 9 mariners from a shipwrecked vessel in 1838, Richard felt the island merited a replacement mine. Rapidly embarking on the challenge of finding one, he has subsequently overcome significant logistical and financial challenges, using exceptional patience and perseverance to co-ordinate the refurbishment and relocation of a mine previously situated 280 miles away in Chapel St Leonard. In parallel with this mammoth project, Richard and Linda have also volunteered to manage a 3rd mine currently located in Milford Haven and are currently working on a plan to relocate it to Saundersfoot, where donations will inevitably benefit from much higher footfall.

As exceptionally resourceful and committed supporters of the Society, Richard and Linda are thoroughly deserving of special recognition for their outstanding efforts as our Honorary Agents.





## Help us to Help Them

There are many ways you can help us to provide a lifeline for seafarers and their families in need:

### By Making A Donation

Donations, however large or small, may be sent to Central Office at anytime. If you would like to donate online please scan the QR code or visit [shipwreckedmariners.org.uk/donate](http://shipwreckedmariners.org.uk/donate)



### By Making Your Gifts Tax Effective

Providing you pay income tax or capital gains tax, all your donations can be treated as Gift Aid. This means that for every £1 that you donate, the Society can claim an additional 25 pence from the taxman. It is only necessary to sign one form to cover all donations until you notify us otherwise. Please complete and return the attached reply card.

### Regular Giving By Standing Order

If you would like to make a regular donation by standing order please let us know and we will send you the necessary form. The Society very much appreciates such regular support, which provides a steady source of income and helps us plan for the future.

### By Remembering the Society In Your Will

If you are making, or renewing your Will please remember the needs of our seafarers and their widows in financial distress. Your gift could make a real difference to them for years to come. You may wish to consider either:

- **A residuary legacy** - which means you leave the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society all or part of your estate once other gifts to family and friends have been distributed or
- **A pecuniary legacy** - which is a fixed sum of money.

Please let us know if you would like further advice on legacies.

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## FREE WILLS Writing Service

The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society has partnered with **Free Wills** to give our supporters and Honorary Agents the opportunity to create their legally binding, solicitor checked, Will (England & Wales) **completely free of charge**. To note this can be done online, or over the phone. Wills can be created anytime throughout the year and there is absolutely no cost to either create a Will, or to update your Will, once created. Once complete Free Wills will send you an electronic version of your Will, which you can either print out yourself, or get a friend/family member to print out for you. Optional services are available at a cost for example, a professionally bound hard copy version of your will, but there is absolutely no obligation to purchase these.

Free Wills is a full member of The Society of Will Writers; is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and has over 5,000+ trusted reviews with an overall 4.9 out of 5 rating on Trustpilot. To find out more visit: [www.freewills.co.uk/charity/shipwreckedmariners](http://www.freewills.co.uk/charity/shipwreckedmariners)



## SHIPWRECKED MARINERS' SOCIETY

1 North Pallant, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1TL

T: (01243) 789329/787761

E: [general@shipwreckedmariners.org.uk](mailto:general@shipwreckedmariners.org.uk)

W: [www.shipwreckedmariners.org.uk](http://www.shipwreckedmariners.org.uk)



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