

Annual Report 2023



General summary

All in all we've had a very successful year and much credit for this has been the support we've had from the older club members and the parents, all of whom have been terrific. Their collective contributions to the progress the club has made, and to the RLSS and drowning prevention, have been exceptional.

Given we, as with many other clubs, and indeed youth organisations generally, have found recruiting new members a struggle, our members having passed some 74 exams or successfully attended related courses, is a great result. Comparisons with previous years since our formation reflect how good a year 2023 has been. (9/2019 – 12/2020 = 42: 2021= 44: 2022 = 42). Whilst a number of these have been periodic retests, each involved significant commitment.

The real 'plus' this year has been the success of the group who, all having passed their 16th birthdays, have qualified as RLSS Instructors as well as completing 2nd Distinctions and provided instruction to younger members. In between times, 3 secured their National Pool Life Guard qualification, and additionally, one, his National Beach Life Guard qualification. Whilst these were not taken as part of the Club activities, we feel justified in 'claiming' some significant part in their success.

We had a less successful year in the Sussex Competitions, partly due to the timing of these and partly due to some star performers carrying injuries which necessitated retiring mid-competition. Our own internal competition had more entries than ever before, even if the number was modest, and the competition was nevertheless fierce and for some, very challenging.

PR-wise we had terrific support for the local press and 'All About' Magazines. We had a number of 'Mentions' in Lifesaver Magazine whilst 3 of our founder members had a great article published in the magazine under the banner 'Why I Volunteer'.

Our 'Outreach' activity this year was exceptional and the support from members and parents was nothing less than phenomenal, as evidenced by the information that follows.

Our previous 2 'Club Videos of the Year' have been well received and our 2023 version, thanks to Stuart Hendey, will be 'premiered' at the Annual Presentation Evening.

A number of Club Members have received 2023 National Honours reflecting their commitment to the work of the RLSS with particular reference to 2022 and a number of parents and the contributions of other helpers have also been recognised with Friends Of The Society Certificates. In March the Council presented the club with one of the Littlehampton Town Merit Awards for Services to the Local Community.

We've seen the retirement of the Survive and Save syllabus, this having been replaced by the National Life Saving Academy syllabus. This new syllabus has thrown up some challenges we have to overcome if we are to retain long term membership. Its long-term objective appears to be to channel club participants towards NPLQ and to a lesser extent NBLG qualification. Getting the ongoing message about general water safety to the largest possible number of people via a life saving club and the environment in which we usually work, is a different issue.

So I guess the question is, do we want a 'club' geared to youngsters learning about lifetime water safety in a fun environment (we've had great fun!) or simply a series of classes ultimately targeting LG qualification? Food for thought!

The Detail Exams & Qualifications:-

Basic Life Support 4: Life Support 3, 6:

Bronze Core 4: Bronze Pool 4: Bronze Stillwater 5: Bronze Beach 5.
Silver Core 2: Silver Pool 2: Silver Stillwater 2: Silver Beach 2.
Gold Pool 5: Gold Stillwater 5: Gold Beach 5.
Distinction Qualification 5
Academy Bronze Certificate 4.
National Pool Life Guard Qualification 3
National Beach Life Guard Qualification 1
RLSS Instructor Qualification Survive and Save 3
RLSS Instructor Qualification Lifesaving Academy 3
RLSS Safeguarding Certificate 3
RLSS Rookie Instructor 2

Competitions:-

Sussex Teams: 16+ 2nd – Julian Lee, Jack Bristow, Olivia Kidd, Elish Edwards
Juniors 3rd - Tassia Wormald, Jude Morris, Sophia Hendey, Ted Young
Sussex Mixed Pairs 1st – Olivia and Jack
4th – Julian and Elish
National Qualifiers:
Youth Pairs 4th – Sophia and Tassia
Masters Men 40-49 1st – Julian

Internal Speed Ladies 1st Tassia Wormald 2nd Olivia Kidd 3rd Sophia Hendey
Men 1st Jude Morris 2nd Jack Bristow 3rd Ted Young
Novices 1st Tom Slade 2nd Faye Thompson 3rd Keris Ginnaw

Volunteer Teaching Commitment

We now have 5 qualified Instructors working in the club. Julian Lee joined David at the beginning of the year whilst Jude, Olivia and Jack all qualified in November as Instructors having been helping with teaching since completing their Instructors Course just before Easter. For the purpose of demonstrating how many hours tuition have been provided, we've used 50% of the club hours of each, other than that for David, as everyone else was at times involved in actively training for retakes or competing. All Open Water hours related to David's activities which included occasionally helping with Horsham LSC. Approximate pool teaching hours provided: 240 hours, & at Lake & Beach Open Water 32 hours.

Finance

Our finances continue in good health thanks to the residual inception Lottery Grant. The accounts have yet to be audited at time of writing, financial year ending as it does on 31st December. Pool hire will always be the primary outgoing and this year amounted to £1,444 and with a few new members adding to the income we were able to reduce the members quarterly fee part way through the year. We are, for the first time since we started, operating at about break even on pool hire.

It is appropriate here to thank The Wave staff for the facility and the help they provide week to week and the support Littlehampton Town Council has provided. Thanks also to Littlehampton Lions for the donation to enable us to secure some additional equipment.

Collections and Donations from various sources helped to oil the wheels and facilitate purchase of equipment, supporting other outreach activities, the competitions and the Presentation Evening. Our biggest outlay this year was the purchase of our mascot 'Norman the Newfie' who has more than earned his keep at numerous events by attracting donations, arousing interest in the club, and 'parading' the RLSS and water safety banner very successfully. Most of this was funded by Sophia's abseil at the end of last year for which she received justifiable national recognition in this year's RLSS Honours. Many thanks to all the 'Norman's' who donned the kit and got very hot at times. To support our participants in external competitions 'Norman' delegated his duties to a smaller Newfoundland mascot, 'Nigel'. That leads us nicely into.....

The RLSS William Henry Awards:-

Throughout the year, those who are Members of the RLSS have been encouraged to log their volunteer hours working on behalf of the Society on the RLSS 'tahdah' computer system – not an easy task in itself! - and those who delivered more than 25 hours in the year achieved Certificates, and over 50's, commemorative badges. Certificates go up in incremental steps viz 25: 50:100: 250: 500 etc.

Certificates received and presented on Presentation Evening by Ken White were;

Jack Bristow – 50 hr Certificate (58 hrs)

Olivia Kidd – 25 hr Certificate (48 hrs)

Hannah Hendey – 50 hr Certificate (68 hrs)

Sophia Hendey – 100 hr Certificate (123.5 hrs)

Jude Morris – 50 hr Certificate (82 hrs)

Julian Lee – 25 hr Certificate (39 hrs)

David Slade – 250 hr Certificate (341.5 hrs)

Tassia Wormald – 25 hr Certificate (29 hrs)

Kim Horner – 25 hr Certificate (29 hrs)

Ted Young – 25 hr Certificate (33 hrs)

Figures in brackets were the hours actually recorded.

Those involved with the club who recorded less than 25 hours were included in the Club Certificate of Appreciation awards - see below.

PR, Publicity, Fun Night 'training sessions' & Outreach.

We've had some terrific fun on event nights at The Wave, among which were our Red Nose Night, Our Coronation Night, Our Halloween Night and some great events away from the pool – the Town Pancake Olympics (a very cold February morning in the High Street), The Food Bank Run at Sainsbury's (buying food for the local Food Bank – Norman got a lot of attention), The visit by the 'Newfs In Action' Team (members being rescued by one of our canine friends), East Preston Festival Parade ('Musicals' theme – we were 'Baywatch The Musical' – oh yes there was! Or will be!) and we took part in both the Littlehampton & Rustington Remembrance Day Parades & Wreath Laying. To finish off the year we had a 10 Pin Bowling Night – won by Tom – and a meal afterwards at Nando's. Then on the last pool night we had some strange pool activities vaguely related to life saving, and, in the dry session, our very own Panto – Oh yes we did!

We see having a physical presence in local community activities as a very important part of getting our drowning prevention message out to the general public and goodness me, didn't we do a lot this year!

Our attendance at many of these and our other successes were widely reported in the local press and magazines, usually with a photo and some water safety message, and a call for new members of course.

We couldn't have done it without the wholehearted support of members and families – so thank you all!

Had the weather been kinder we would also have taken part in the 2-day Riverside Festival and the Littlehampton Bonfire Society Annual Parade through the town. Best laid plans foiled by things beyond our control.

However, I make no apology for listing the events we did attend this year and who knows, perhaps a conversation had with a passing member of the public may just have saved someone from drowning, 3, 4 or more years hence.

22 Club Members or Parents contributed 355 hours of 'Outreach' PR work on behalf of the Club, and the Society, in the course of these events - a fantastic achievement.

Littlehampton Council Pancake Olympics – 25th February

Red Nose Week – Shop for Food Bank at Sainsbury's 20th May

Food Bank Delivery 23rd May

East Preston Charity Market 3rd June

East Preston Festival Parade 10th June

Drowning Prevention Day Stand at The Wave 17th June
Littlehampton Friday Market and DPW Stand 23rd June
Armed Forces Day Stand - Littlehampton Sea Front 24th June
St Oscar Romero Secondary School Fete 1st July
Rustington Lions Charity Street Fayre 8th July
'Newfs In Action' Newfoundland Rescue Dog Event – Littlehampton Beach 20th August
Littlehampton Family Day 9th September
Remembrance Day Parades at both Littlehampton & Rustington 12th November

2023 RLSS Honours

3 members received Honours at a ceremony in Coventry these being in recognition of our 2022 activities.

Sophia Hendey was presented with The Ken White Cup for fundraising as well as a Certificate of Merit reflecting her fundraising and outreach activities. She also received the Sussex Young Life Saver of the Year Award.

David Slade received the Stanley Peck Area Organiser of the Year Cup for the Wave Club development since it's foundation as well as long service to the Society.

Jude Morris received a Certificate of Merit recognising his considerable involvement in our outreach activities and parading as the RLSS 'Perry' mascot (pre 'Norman' days).

A number of supporters have also received Friends Of The Society Certificates. These were presented locally during the year by the RLSS UK President Debbie Hunt and were to:-

Carolyn Bristow, Sara Morris, Kim Horner, Jo Hargreaves, Stuart Hendey, Cllr Jill Long, whilst on Presentation Evening, she presented one to Gary Cooke.

The 2023 Presentation Evening

This took place on Wednesday January 17th 2024 at St Andrews United Reformed Church, Rustington and was the first we'd held independently from Horsham LSC. We felt we were now well enough established to have our own event.

Nearly 50 people attended and presentations were made by RLSS UK President Debbie Hunt, Past UK President, Ken White MBE, Cllr Freddie Tandy, Littlehampton Mayor 2023/24, Jill Long, Town Mayor until May 2023, John Stainer, Sussex Branch President and Doug Simmonds Sussex Branch Chairman. We were delighted Matt Williams, Manager at The Wave, and Matt Eden, Freedom Leisure Arun Area Manager, were also able to attend.

The Endeavour Cup was awarded to Belinda Barrington and the Club members elected, by a majority vote, Sophia Hendey as Club Member of the Year.

To the delight of everyone, Cheryl Payne and her Newfoundland dog 'Bandit' were present, and 'Bandit' had a special commemorative bib presented to him.

At the end our Video of the Year was premiered and we have to thank Stuart Hendey for all the hard work that went into its preparation.

The evening was a great success and reflected the tremendous support received from everyone involved with our club. The special WLSC cakes were scrumptious. Thank you ladies!

The future

Thankfully, the immediate future looks pretty secure but we have to be mindful that the backbone of our membership is now aged 16 and heavily involved in 6th Form studies. We may reasonably assume that these hard-core, hard-working, committed, and talented young people will sometime in the next 2 years, perhaps move off into University or other Higher Education and create a void. It is thus vital that we see some additional members coming along and joining. So, getting out there, in the public face, to generate new member interest, is not a hope, it's a necessity.

We've a message that's well worth passing on – just look at the number of drownings we hear about, particularly in the summer months. Everyone one is a tragedy, everyone is someone's child, mother, father, relative or friend.

So, onward into 2024. Let's see if we can maintain the tempo and continue to 'punch above our weight'.

David Slade

Chairman

January 2024