

Port Isaac Coastguard

The United Kingdom Coastguard Service was officially established in 1822 to prevent smuggling. From 1923 to 1939 it was administered the Board of Trade, 1939 to 1940 the Ministry of Transport, 1940 to 1945 the Admiralty, 1945 to 1964 back to the Ministry of Transport, 1964 to 1983 the Department of Trade and 1983 to date the Department of Transport. In 1931 the Board of Trade formed Coast Life-Saving Corps locally in Port Isaac, Trebetherick and Boscastle. These units were made up of 20 volunteers using the Life Saving Apparatus [LSA] and were know as LSA teams. The Life Saving Apparatus was withdrawn in 1988. In 1960 the local units we renamed as Cliff Rescue Equipment teams [CRE].

Up until the 1970s it was possible for men to belong to both the Coastguard and the RNLI but since then, individuals who are prepared to volunteer for service saving lives at sea or on the coast have to make a choice between the organisations. Of course today, both men and women are accepted into service for both the Coastguard and the RNLI. The Board of Trade instituted an annual award - The Wreck Service Shield which was awarded for the most outstanding rescue of the year. In 1939 this Shield was awarded to Trebetherick Life Saving Company for saving three lives from the wreck of *HMS Medea*. The Port Isaac Life Saving Company were also commended. In 1971 the award was renamed the Rescue Shield by the Department of Trade.



Members of the Port Isaac Cliff Rescue Team

Standing: Ian Fuller, Michael Whitfield, Tom Cleave, Andrew Cleave, Chris Bolton, Richard Cook, Station Officer Ken Richards, Ian Skinner

Sitting: Roy Speakman, Melwyn Roskilly, Mark Graham

They are trained in cliff rescue techniques using the latest equipment and this picture shows them after a training session at Port Gaverne.

The team carries out searches for missing or overdue persons along the cliffs and recovers injured casualties from sometimes isolated locations working with the rescue helicopters and air ambulance. They also work closely with the RNLI.

The Team's patch is from Start Point just south of Trebarwith Strand and extends to Lundy Bay, two miles west of Port Quin.

The role of HM Coastguard

The UK government assumes responsibility for civilian maritime Search and Rescue, and delegate this responsibility to Her Majesty's Coastguard – part of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Her Majesty's Coastguard coordinate maritime search and rescue within the UK Search and Rescue region, and have a variety of resources they can task to emergency situations – either people in distress at sea, or emergencies on the coast or shoreline. HM Coastguard also has their own volunteer service, the Coastguard Rescue Service, who are teams of volunteers who can respond to land based emergencies such as cliff and mud rescues or searches for missing people.

19 Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs) form a network of command and control centres for responding to reports of maritime and coastal distress. Watch keeping staff in these centres provide a 24 hour service to mariners and coastal users by receiving incoming distress calls and sending resources to their rescue. These calls could come in via the monitoring of emergency radio frequencies, or by 999 calls, as the Coastguard are a recognised 999 emergency service.



Photo courtesy Paula Scott

Port Isaac Rocket Brigade in the 1950s

Back row: Billy Steer, Les Keat with Harry May in front of him, Dick Pooley who used to drive the lorry with the rocket equipment, Charlie Julian who was 'number one' and it was his job to actually fire the rocket - latterly this was done from the top of Lobber where the pole which used to be climbed still stands and the rocket was fired to the other side of Pine Haven - Dick Darbyshire, Ian Honey, Cyril Spry

Middle Row: Ray Provis, Morley Found, Peter Rowe, Mike Scott, Jack Couch, Joe Seabrite
Front row: Coastguard Couch, Jack Rowe, Chief Coastguard Hyde, Frank Rowe (Peter and Jack's father) with Leonard Collings behind him, Sammy Thomas, Len Collins, John Cann



The Coastguard used to give a **Bronze Medal Award** for **Rocket Brigade Service** when a rescue had been carried out either from a ship or from rocks by firing a line from a rocket launcher out to the casualty where it would be secured, then with rope and running blocks set up by the **Rocket Brigade** were able to haul the individual survivors safely to shore by the use of **The Bosun's Chair**. These rescues were often carried out in dangerous or storm conditions calling for great courage, skill and tenacity on the part of the rescue team.

