



The RNLI Heritage Trust

The RNLI has a rich and fascinating history. Its story can be told in a variety of ways, from the humanity of saving lives to the rapid changes in technology needed to accomplish this over the past 180 years. The RNLI has captured this information in archives and object collections, sometimes establishing museums where there has been a particularly strong story to tell. The museums and archives hold invaluable information and it was recently decided to improve the care of the collections, and public access to it, by placing RNLI heritage on a professional museum footing.

What is the RNLI Heritage Trust?

The Heritage Trust exists to safeguard RNLI heritage and to support and promote the RNLI, past, present and future through its museums and archive. The Trust was established in 2004 as a subsidiary charity of the RNLI and retains its interests right across the Institution. Today's photographs, technical plans and lifeboats become tomorrow's collections and archives that the Trust will strive to safeguard for the future.

The RNLI and Heritage Trust work together in partnership. The RNLI Henry Blogg Museum in Cromer reopened in April 2006 in a new, purpose-built, museum. The Grace Darling Museum at Bamburgh is currently undergoing a major Heritage Lottery Fund redevelopment. For these, the RNLI Project Manager coordinates the build and new interpretation for the museums while the Heritage Team documents and conserves the collections for display.

Conservation is a major part of the Trust's work and, in some cases, its preventative measures are happening not a moment too soon. The excessively high humidity at the 'old' museum in Cromer caused parts of the historic lifeboat HF Bailey to corrode, while the wrong light levels at Bamburgh turned Grace Darling's hair from brunette to a bleached white. Some damage is irreversible, but further deterioration can be prevented by investing in proper collections care, training for our museum volunteers and improved methods of display and storage.

How is the Heritage Trust funded?

The Trust receives an annual grant from the RNLI to cover the core costs of staff salaries, marketing and museum building maintenance. It relies on heritage grants, donations, legacies and self-generated funds for the rest of its income. The RNLI is prevented from spending its money on museums and archives, other than for educational activities or vital building work. The Heritage Trust, however, can apply for heritage specific grants and trust funding for which the RNLI is often ineligible.

Donations and grants given to the RNLI Heritage Trust will be spent specifically on the RNLI's museums and collections to benefit its heritage.

All donations are welcome.