



## Henry Blogg GC, BEM

Henry Blogg joined Cromer lifeboat crew in January 1894 at the age of 18. When he retired in September 1947, he had served in the Cromer lifeboats for 53 years, nine months, and had been Coxswain for over 37 years.

During those 53 years the lifeboats went out on service 387 times and saved 873 lives. Blogg won the RNLI's Gold Medal for gallantry three times, its Silver Medal four times, the George Cross and the British Empire Medal. His record is unequalled in the history of the lifeboat service.

At the peak of his fame, his popularity could be measured alongside sport and film stars and it all began with the rescue of 11 crew members from the shattered hulk of the *SS Fernebo* on 9 January 1917 – one of the most courageous and spectacular services ever undertaken by lifeboatmen around our shores.



Despite having already carried out one launch that day, Blogg and his crew (whose average age was over 50), battled through a gale to reach the stricken wreck 400 yards offshore. It was remarkable in that it was performed in an open boat, powered only by oars and the raw strength of the crew.

By the time they pulled alongside the *Fernebo*, they had been fighting the elements for nearly 14 hours. Every man aboard the lifeboat *Louisa Heartwell* was decorated for his gallantry and Blogg received the first of his Gold Medals.

If he had performed no more rescues, Blogg's reputation as one of the boldest and most skilful seamen in the history of the RNLI would have been secure. However the *Fernebo* would be followed by a string of classic services – the *SS Georgia*, the *Monte Nervoso*, the *Sepoy* and the *English Trader*, to name but a few. His impact on the RNLI was immense and his exploits off the coast of Norfolk did more than anything else to endear the RNLI to the British public in the first half of the twentieth century.

The most dramatic and difficult rescue off the North Norfolk coast to the 65-ton barge *Sepoy* was described by the ever-modest Blogg as 'an easy rescue' but he admitted that there had been 'some difficulties'. It was later described as the worst journey in his then 24 years as Coxswain.

*HF Bailey* (pictured right in the new Henry Blogg Museum) is one of the most famous of all lifeboats. Her Operational Number of lucky seven trebled (777) was a particularly good omen for anyone superstitious. The boat served at Cromer from 1935 to 1945, including the years of WW II (1939-45) and during this period under the command of Blogg she launched over 120 times and saved nearly 520 lives. The partnership between Henry Blogg and *HF Bailey* is legendary in lifeboat lore.



Henry Blogg retired from active service in 1947 at the age of 71. His retirement gifts included an illuminated address which read: 'In the 72 years that you have lived in Cromer, and particularly during the 53 years that you have served the RNLI, you have, by your deeds and example, brought great credit upon the town, which is proud to call you citizen, and upon the lifeboat service.'

Henry Blogg died on 13 June 1954. There is a memorial to Henry on the upper promenade in Cromer, looking out to sea.