



## The *Zetland* story

The *Zetland* was built in 1802 by Henry Greathead, builder of the first lifeboat, the *Original*. Greathead built 31 lifeboats of which *Zetland* is number 11 and the only one left in existence. She was purchased by the people of Redcar and named *Zetland* in honour of the Lord of the Manor and remained in service at Redcar until 1880, saving over 500 lives.



The *Zetland* is a clinker-built boat of oak frame and larch planking 9.15 (30 ft) long with a 3.1m (10ft) beam. She *Originally* had a thick cork band (fender) running around the top of the boat but this was later replaced with extra internal buoyancy tanks.

As a double-ended boat the *Zetland* could be rowed in any direction without having to turn around in heavy seas. She required a crew of 13, although the number of oarsmen could be increased to as many as 20 in severe weather.

The *Zetland* was kept in a boathouse close to the beach and was launched with the aid of a wheeled carriage. Local people helped to haul her over the beach to the sea and a team of horses from a local farm was also used. When the lifeboat was needed the crew was called out by a local boy parading in the streets with a drum, beating out the rhythm 'Come along brave boys'.

During her years of service only one lifeboatman was ever lost from the *Zetland*, on Christmas day 1836. Crew member Will Guy was washed overboard while trying to throw a line to the Danish tug *Caroline*. The *Zetland* was swept ashore unable to relaunch and the crew of the *Caroline* drowned.

A memorable rescue took place in 1854 when the *Jane Erskine* ran aground off Redcar. Local fishermen went out in their cobs to refloat her but the weather suddenly deteriorated. The *Zetland* was launched and picked up the crew of the *Jane Erskine* along with 26 fishermen. Together with the lifeboat crew, the *Zetland* carried 52 people that day.

For many years the *Zetland* was maintained by the Tees Bay Lifeboat and Shipwreck Society but, in 1857, it was decided to hand over administration to the RNLI. In 1864 the *Zetland* was damaged during a rescue and was considered no longer fit for service. The RNLI supplied a new self-righting boat named *Crossley* and made arrangements to have the *Zetland* broken up. An angry crowd prevented this and £100 was raised for the boat to return to South Shields for repairs.

The lifeboat crew disliked the *Crossley* and her replacement *Burton-on-Trent*, was also unpopular. In 1877 the Friendly Society of the United Free Gardeners (UFG) offered to build Redcar a lifeboat. After a dispute with the RNLI over the design and name of the boat, the UFG built the *Emma* as *Originally* planned and presented her to the people of Redcar to use alongside the RNLI boat.

In 1880, when a schooner struck Coatham pier, the *Zetland* made her last rescue. Both the *Burton-on-Trent* and *Emma* lifeboats were out of action, so the *Zetland* was launched and brought the crew of seven to safety.