

## Historic lifesavers in the spotlight



**ABOVE:** The former lifeboats gathered at Albert Quay, Fowey, in June, with Harold Salvesen nearest camera, and City of Bradford III at the left most prominent.

**RIGHT:** The remarkably well-preserved Michael Stephens leads the historic lifeboats out of Fowey harbour, with Guy and Clare Hunter following behind.



Fowey photos by Nicholas Leach

During the last weekend in June, no fewer than 14 historic former lifeboats gathered at the picturesque Cornish port of Fowey making an impressive and unusual sight for locals and visitors alike. The get together, which has become an annual event, involved many well-preserved lifeboats ranging from the Fowey-based steel-hulled Treffry (ex-Rotary Service), which is now employed as the local pilot

boat, to the restored pulling lifeboat Ryder, based at Polperro.

The majority of the lifeboats were built in the 1950s and 1960s, remain largely unaltered from their days saving lives at sea, and all maintained in superb condition by their very dedicated owners. One of the most unusual attendees was the former Lowestoft lifeboat Michael Stephens, built in 1938, which remains

almost exactly as she was when in service. Her throttles and engine controls are housed in the engine canopy, a unique arrangement that is a reminder of the lifeboats of the 1930s.

An unexpected visitor was the RNLI's first twin-screw lifeboat, William and Kate Johnston, which made an appearance while returning from the Liverpool River Festival. She is celebrating the 80th anniversary of

her building this year and, at 60ft, is one of the largest lifeboats ever built.

During the afternoon of 28 June, the lifeboats were open to the public, and hundreds of people took the opportunity to look over them. Afterwards, a parade of sail up the river to the harbour entrance and back made an impressive spectacle as the old lifeboats showed a fine turn of speed as they put to sea.

## VARIETY ON THE MERSEY



**ABOVE:** The brig Phoenix moored at Canning Dock.

The 23rd annual Mersey River Festival was held in June with events centred on the restored Albert Dock in Liverpool, adjacent to the Maritime Museum. The festival brought together a number of interesting vessels including Phoenix, a two-masted brig with a rig from the mid-18th century, and Mathew, of Bristol, a replica of the 18th Century square-rigged caravel that took John Cabot 500 years ago on his journey that led to the discovery of Newfoundland.

Perhaps the major attraction was Grand Turk, the first wooden frigate built for over a 150 years. Also in attendance were a variety of historical craft, such as the Nobby boats, former Morecombe Bay prawners that took part in the annual Nobby race on the river.

The festival brought together a collection of various craft, ranging from the Archer class fast patrol boat HMS Charger to narrow boats and yachts. Overall the event was hailed a success with estimates of over 350,000 people attending, helped no doubt by the excellent weather. Graham Brazendale

Graham Brazendale

### Historic lifeboats at Fowey

Name	RNLI service	Home port
Ryder	1902-30	Polperro
William & Kate Johnston	1923-52	Chatham
Atlantic (ex-W. & S.)	1931-69	Falmouth
Michael Stephens	1939-75	Newton Ferrers
Gertrude	1946-81	Mevagissey
Duchess of Cornwall	1951-82	Falmouth
City of Bradford III	1954-85	Falmouth
Guy and Clare Hunter	1955-88	Northern Ireland
Frank Spillar Locke	1957-85	Isles of Scilly
Duke of Cornwall	1961-89	Dartmouth
Joseph Soar	1963-90	Salcombe
Douglas Currie	1974-89	Portishead
Harold Salvesen	1974-92	Falmouth
Treffry	1974-97	Fowey



**LEFT:** The historically significant William and Kate Johnston with Michael Stephens off Fowey harbour.