

MBL 020

Colin Midwinter (born 1954) and Harry Roberts (born 1958) are both RNLI Morecambe volunteers.

	How did they get involved with RNLI? Colin as a teenager in 1973 through the methodist church. Harry in 1986 through a friend.
2m 30	What does the organisation do and what is your relationship to RNLI as volunteers? They describe what the RNLI does and local support - 'very humbling how people support them'. They give local examples. The Hovercraft was acquired through a single donation.
6 m	They discuss the hovercraft (4 in RNLI service).
6m 40	How does this affect your daily life? They give example of disruptions (which become part of your life). Harry's daughter has grown up with RNLI and is now part of the crew. Harry is now the hovercraft mechanic and one of the launching authorities. Do you miss not going out on crew? Colin talks about taking his pager with him everywhere. Difficulties of mixing work and being on crew and disruptions to life.
9m 30	New alert system uses mobile phones. Maroons were used when they first started. They describe the process of summoning the crew with maroons. Pagers are still used as they are most reliable. Maroons would gather a crowd which caused problems.
11m 12	Changes? They talk of vessels and radios. Everything now requires more training. They now carry first aid equipment and aretrained to ambulance technician level. They used to push the boat in by hand now they use a vehicle. They would push the boat out to the nearest channel and one of the crew would have to pull the trailer back. No radio communication originally. Originally brought casualty back to shore but now they try to stabilise them on-board.
14m 28	The boat used to come in a bag and they used to have to blow it up. (telephone call for Harry) Colin talks about crew numbers and casualty numbers in boats.
16m 3	How much information do you receive when you are called out? Colin describes what info they receive.
16m 30	Gap in interview.... Colin talks about the geographical reach of the Morecambe crew. Coin, using a map, describes how the crew covers the Lune and where they launch from to get on the Lune. Call outs on the Lune. Colin explains how the Coastguard are in charge. He talks about the other rescue 'assets' in the area. They make a decision to go out once the Coastguard calls. They won't go out if it's suicidal to do so. Colin talks about being asked to put the boat on the canal.
24m 30	Were they involved in the storm Desmond floods? Yes, they were but unofficially. They helped people stuck on a roof. Colin explains how there are flood rescue teams which are specially trained.
21m 37	Changes have evolved over the years. Originally the crew didn't have dry suits but used waders and oilskins. The heavy Life jackets were filled with straw. They talk about the kit of today, in previous times they were 'always cold and wet'. It's much safer now. Colin talks about a Central Pier incident where he fell out of the boat. They didn't have anywhere to make coffee so after a shout they were reliant on Keith's wife to come down with a flask - often with rum in it.
24m 49	When does the current boat house date from? 1996. They talk of a 'boat garage' they had which, in the storms of 78 was lifted off its foundations

	leaving the boat remaining. An old crew member had a surplus mast and the lifeboat crew had to dig the hole and mix concrete by hand.
26 m	Do you miss the old days? In some way yes, probably had more autonomy - now there's a lot of training.
27m	Accountability and health and safety? The crew dynamic has changed. There used to be people associated with fishing but now that link has gone.
28m 45	Can you describe the Bay and how it effects how you operate? Harry talks about the physical qualities of the Bay. He refers to the Chinese Cockling tragedy (which was one of the first jobs for the hovercraft). There is no chart for the Bay beyond Heysham Harbour. Most of what they know comes through local knowledge. The Bay is really an estuary and heavy rainfall can change channels overnight. They talk of why the hovercraft is necessary on the Bay as they need to travel so far to find a channel. Knowledge is passed down from crew.
32 m	Do you remember your first shout? Colin remembers a boat off the Central Pier. They remember ones that didn't end well and that this is accompanied by a sense of failure. Harry has been on over 500 jobs. They remember funny call outs. Is there a typical call out? Yes, these are mud rescues where they have been very close to losing people. They describe one such call out.
35m 25	What happened before mobile phones? They talk of people spotting people waving. The number of call outs have increased. They would rather go out even if there's no real problem. Colin talks of warning notices along the promenade. 50% of people who drown aren't involved in water-based activity. The station has been doing work with the public to pass on the message 'respect the water'. There has been a reduction in real call outs over the last couple of years.
39m 50	Changes in Morecambe? Colin talks about going away but coming back. Harry grew up in a hotel in the West End. They had jobs as children (as everyone did). Harry talks of taking bogies up to the train. Colin worked back stage at the Pier. He talks about working at the Winter Gardens, but that the school inspector stopped it, also a delivery boy for Co-op. He was at the Winter Garden during the ice show.
44m 40	What does the future hold? Talks about RNLI now building its own boats. The Morecambe hovercraft is beyond its renewal date – replacement will cost half a million. Also, there's a need to move the two stations together as logically it's difficult at the moment to manage. It's increasingly difficult to launch the boat from this position.
47m 40	Alarm sounds for launch request...
	Interview by Emma Aylett Summarised by Emma Aylett
	May 2018