

# Formby Lifeboat Station



# Formby Civic Society



## Formby

The lifeboat station at Formby was the first in the world. Built in the early 1770s, the boat house and life boat were there to save lives on the often treacherous Formby coast. Visitors today can still see the foundations and parts of the slipway on the beach.

### Where was the first lifeboat station in the UK?

**The first lifeboat station in Britain was at Formby beach, established in 1776 by William Hutchinson, Dock Master for the Liverpool Common Council.**

In 2003 Reg and Barbara Yorke from Formby Civic Society discovered that Formby's lifeboat station was the country's first. Canadian maritime historian Clayton Evans has argued the station was the world's first.

A film was made in 1916 of the lifeboat crew taking part in a practise exercise. It shows horses from the an artillery regiment stationed at nearby Altcar Rifle Range pulling the lifeboat across Formby beach.



Formby Lifeboat Station- A World First

# Part of the slipway



# Formby Lifeboat Station

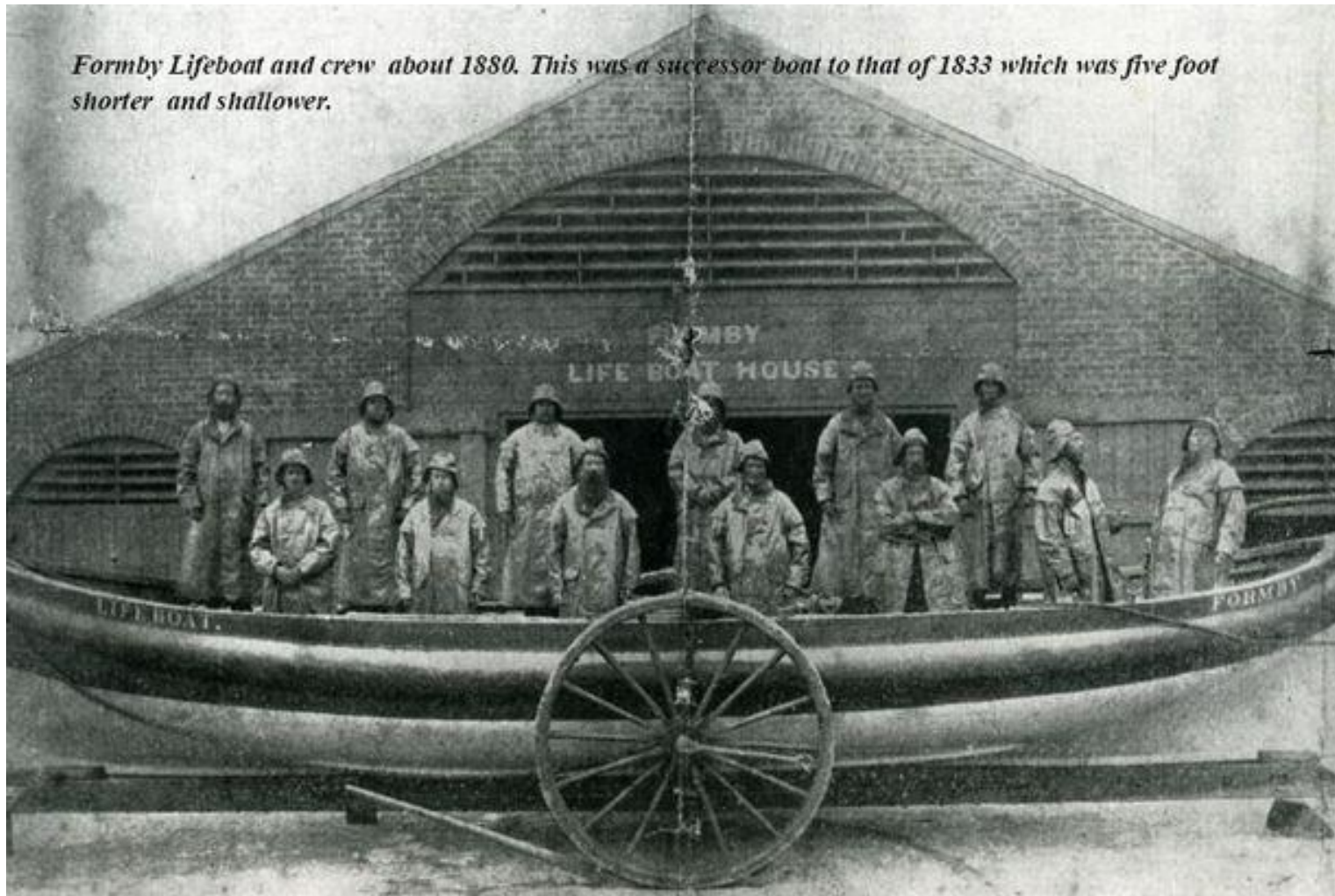
Video of Formby Lifeboat Station and photographs

- <https://formbycivicsociety.org.uk/formby-history/the-origins-of-britains-first-lifeboat-station>
- <https://lancashirepast.com/2018/08/27/formby-lifeboat-station-a-world-first/>

# Formby Lifeboat Station

- William Hutchinson, who was the Liverpool Dock Master, founded Britain's first lifeboat station in Formby. No exact record has been found, but we believe the boat used to have been a "Mersey Gig".
- This amazing station was built on what would later become Lifeboat Road.
- On the night of November 19, 1833, the station's crew helped save the lives of 13 men when pilot ship *The Good Intent* was caught in a terrible storm in the Irish Sea, off Formby Beach.
- The station was abandoned in 1918 and eventually demolished in the 1960s.
- The foundations of the last of the lifeboat station buildings remain on the beach.
- Wetherspoons decided to name their new pub in Formby *The Lifeboat*, which reflects the town's historic association with sea rescue.





A Formby Civic Society photograph of Formby Lifeboat crew



The text reads: The Formby Lifeboat Station was established in approximately 1776, by William Hutchinson, Dock Master for the Liverpool Common Council. It was the first manned lifeboat station in the UK and possibly the world. It was strategically located at Formby point on the banks of the River Mersey and administered by the Liverpool Docks Trust.



- In 1715, the Port of Liverpool was home to the world's first wet dock making it a major centre for global trade. After many catastrophic shipwrecks at the entrance to the port, it was decided that a permanently manned rescue boat was required. The lifeboat was originally crewed by 12 men and a coxswain and launched on a carriage pulled by six horses. Eventually there were three lifeboats operated by the Liverpool Docks Trust and in 1896 the RNLI took over responsibility for them from the Mersey Dock Committee. The Formby Lifeboat Station remained in service until the First World War, eventually closing in 1918. The boathouse and cottage continued as a café until it was finally demolished in 1970.

# Sefton's Dangerous Coast

- The shallow seas of Liverpool Bay conceal a maze of treacherous sandbanks and channels, which in the days before satellite navigation and GPS claimed many vessels as they sailed the historic Mersey shipping lanes.
- Over 300 vessels have met their end along the coast between the Mersey and Ribble estuary since the middle ages.
- To aid navigation through the Formby Channel into the Mersey, vessels used a line of sight between the lighthouse at the mouth of the Alt and the Victoria Beach Mark to help them achieve safe passage.
- Formby Lighthouse was one of the earliest nautical structures erected on the Sefton coast to improve the safety of the Port of Liverpool.
- The lifeboat station proved so successful that many similar schemes were soon introduced elsewhere along the British coast.

# The Coast

## Look-outs

- In 1804, look-outs were installed at Formby to spot surprise attacks on Liverpool. The site later became a coastguard station, helping vessels in distress, in partnership with the local lifeboat service.

## Tide-poles

- Tide-poles provided tidal recording in Liverpool Bay. The recordings later developed into a yearly tide table.

## Managing the coast

- Modern coastal defence aims to work with nature and design defences that disperse wave energy, rather than try to control it. Sand dunes, salt-marsh and other natural systems can all help to keep our coast healthy.

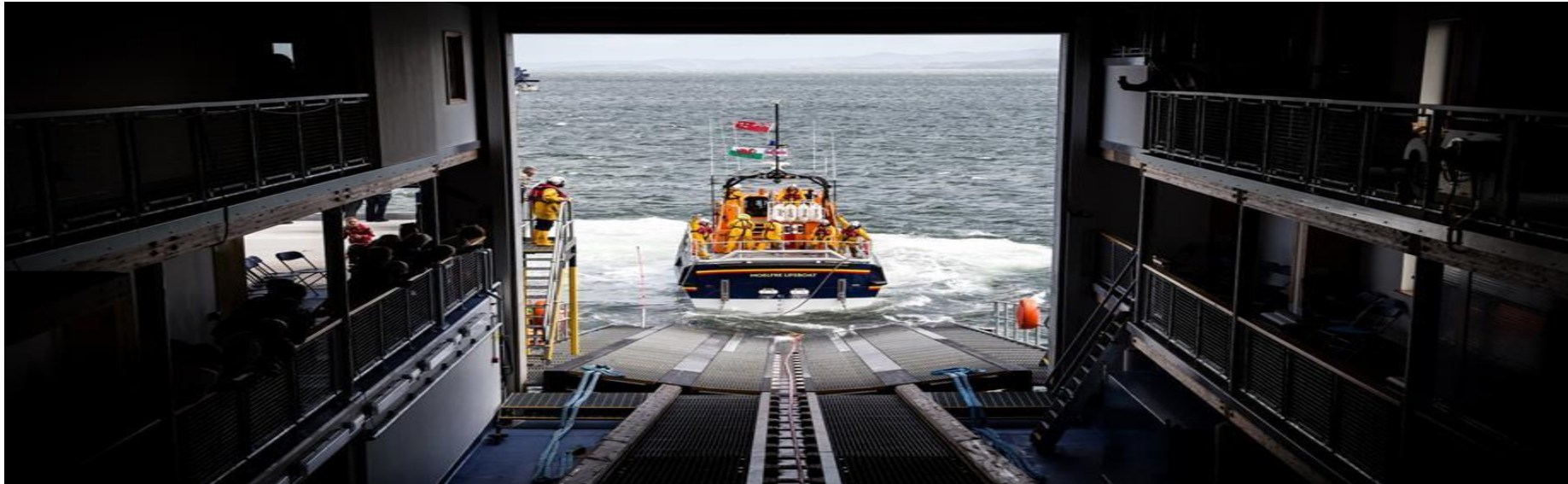
## Shipwrecks

- Some of our shipwrecks reveal tragedies, while others conjure up far-flung destinations and exotic ports of departure. Shipping from all over the world still appears on the horizon as it moves in and out of Liverpool. Remains on shipwrecks can be seen along the local coast line. (Bradda, Mussel, Pegu are all local wrecks that can still be seen.)

# Lifeboat Stations Today

## Our lifeboat stations

The 238 lifeboat stations of the RNLI create a ring of safety around the coasts of the UK and Ireland. Some have been housing lifeboats for decades, others specially built to tackle the unique geography of the UK and Irish coastlines. And whether they're in the heart of a busy harbour, at the bottom of a cliff face, or on a busy waterway, they are all uniquely placed to provide the quickest response to a call for help.



# Royal National Lifeboat Institution RNLI

449 Lifeboats

238 Lifeboat Stations

5,600 Operational Crew



# Videos

- **Formby RNLI launch during World War One**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjsskDYrr\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjsskDYrr_o)

- **Old Formby Lifeboat House**

• <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELuXbOpyP8U>

- **Formby point lifeboat station world's first**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PV1AfYmf3hY>