

# NORFOLK ASSOCIATION, For saving the Lives of Shipwrecked Mariners.

The *Rising Sun* article on 6 January 1824 shows that sea rescue efforts were already in place around parts of Britain's coastline through local initiatives but that 'the plan should become more extended and that an Association should be formed of the whole county'.

The article further describes how the county-wide Norfolk Association for Saving the Lives of Shipwrecked Mariners developed its organisational structure and funding. Its committee consulted and followed the plan of Sir William Hillary's appeal pamphlet and also sought to raise funds for the purchase of Captain Manby's apparatus for rescue.

The emergence of several such regional organisations, each with the same lifesaving goals, gave weight to Hillary's claim that a nationally coordinated lifeboat service was utterly essential. Whether on a local or regional scale, there were people out there interested and willing to organise and fund lifesaving at sea. Hillary meant to ensure this happened on a national scale.

*Rising Sun* article, 6 January 1824  
Courtesy: Manx National Heritage

[Having given the introduction to the second edition of the Appeal, &c. &c., by Sir Wm. Hillary, Bart. in another part of this paper, we have great pleasure in stating, that the noble and glorious work has already been put in motion; and considering that it has taken its rise from the Isle of Man, which may be considered altogether a maritime spot, we are persuaded that every account of its success will be read with pleasure by the inhabitants in general of our favoured little Isle.—The *Monthly Review* for August last says, after giving the outlines of Sir William's plan:—"We hope that the benevolent Baronet will not be disappointed in his expectations, and that he will himself receive the complimentary reward to which his exertions and object entitle him. It would occupy too much of our space to enter more minutely into the proposition, and indeed we prefer to recommend the pamphlet itself to general perusal."—Ed.]

On Saturday se'nnight a meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, and Inhabitants of the County, was held at the New Shirehall, for the purpose of forming an Association for Saving the lives of Shipwrecked Mariners on the whole line of the coast of Norfolk. The meeting was numerously attended, amounting to upwards of 100 noble and gentlemen of the highest respectability.

The Hon. John Wodehouse, Vice-Admiral of the county, having been called to the Chair upon the motion of Lord Suffield, opened the business by reading the letter in pursuance of which the meeting had assembled; he then proceeded to observe that it was not perhaps generally known that Committees had for some time been in existence at Mundesley and other points of the coast, for the immediate purpose of superintending the apparatus for saving lives in cases of shipwreck. Their means, however, were necessarily very limited, the funds having arisen from the contributions of a few individuals only. A strong wish had lately been expressed that the plan should become more extended, and that an Association should be formed of the whole county: it was therefore in compliance with the general feeling which appeared to prevail upon the subject that the present meeting had been called together.

Lord Suffield, in explaining his view of the subject, referred to a small pamphlet he then held in his hand, written by Sir Wm. Hillary, with the benevolent design of establishing a National Institution for the preservation of lives and property from shipwreck. [From this he read the six articles as heads of the general plan given in the *Rising Sun* of the 5d of June, 1823.]

The entire adoption of such a plan, however, his Lordship observed, might be too much for a county to undertake. In contemplating the establishment of a Norfolk Association of a similar kind, it must of course be taken

for granted, that individuals through living at a distance from the coast, still felt an equal interest about the preservation of the lives of their fellow creatures with those whose local situation made them witness to the distressful scenes. It was from this circumstance that it would be advisable that a Central Committee should be formed to meet at Norwich, at stated periods, and that with them should rest the management of the accounts. To the district Committees would belong the superintendance of apparatus; and it should be for them to report to the Central Committee the nature of their proceedings, and the state of their expenditure. The primary step towards forming the Association would therefore be the appointment of the Central Committee, and he considered that the Gentlemen he saw around him manifested by their presence the interest they felt in the plan, and would be ready to take upon themselves that office. It would be for them to appoint the District Committees. His Lordship recommended that the Central Committee should immediately inform themselves, as far as practical knowledge could do it, what were the most dangerous parts of the Norfolk coast; what places Mortars and Life Boats were not already stationed at; and where they could be placed with the probability of being used with effect. The first appropriation of the funds raised ought, he said, necessarily to be for the purchase of Capt. Manby's, and all other necessary apparatus of the kind; what rewards should be bestowed upon those who had displayed great activity and zeal in saving the lives of their fellow-creatures should next be taken into consideration; and finally, some provision should be made if possible for the families of those who had lost their own lives in the laudable enterprise of saving the lives of others. His Lordship then read the resolutions, which he proposed for the adoption of the meeting. They embodied the propositions contained in his Lordship's speech, and named a committee of 71 of the principal gentry of the country.

The Hon. Capt. Irby seconded the Resolutions.

Lord Suffield stated that he had received a letter from Mr. Coke, in which that Hon. Member expressed his regret of not being able to attend the meeting, but assured him (Lord S.) that he was a warm friend to the object for which it was convened. The Duke of Gloucester being on a visit at Holkham, the worthy member was prevented from leaving home.

J. J. Gurney, Esq. read over the names of a number of individuals who had signified to him their intention to support the Association.

The Resolutions were carried unanimously.

A subscription was then commenced, and donations (from £25 downward) to the amount of £500 were also received.

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1. How would the existence of local or regional lifesaving at sea groups help Sir William Hillary's campaign?

2. What resources did regional lifesaving organisations use?

3. What benefits would organising a national lifesaving organisation have over groups organised on a regional basis?