

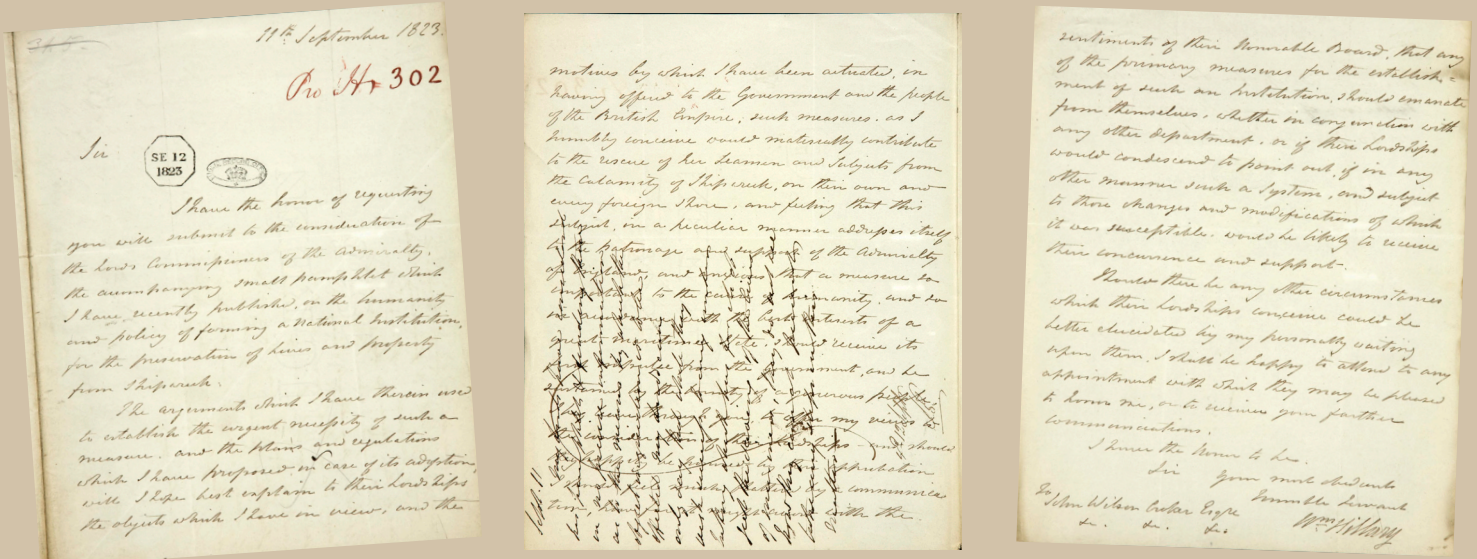
## Source 13: Response to Sir William Hillary's letter to the Admiralty

Sir William Hillary wrote a letter to John Wilson Croker of the Admiralty requesting that he submits his appeal pamphlet to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for consideration.

The response from the Admiralty to Sir William Hillary's appeal pamphlet shows one of the main obstacles to the success of his campaign for a nationally coordinated lifeboat service. While in

favour of Hillary's ideas and wishing him the best, the Admiralty distanced itself from the responsibility of carrying Hillary's plan into action, saying that he gave no clear explanation of how such an institution could be set up.

Without the powerful Admiralty's direct involvement, Hillary had a challenge to fulfil his goal.



Letter from Sir William Hillary to John Wilson Croker Esquire at the Admiralty, 11 September 1823  
 Courtesy: The National Archives

Sir

I have the honour of requesting you will submit to the consideration of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the accompanying small pamphlet which I have recently published, on the humanity and policy of forming a national Institution, for the preservation of lives and property from shipwreck. The arguments which I have therein used To establish the urgent necessity of such a measure and the plans and regulations which I have proposed in case of its adoption, will I hope best explain to their Lordships the objects which I have in view, and the motives by which I have been actuated, in having offered to the Government and the people of the British Empire, such measures as I humbly conceive would materially contribute to the rescue of her seamen and subjects from the calamity of shipwreck, on their own and every foreign shore, and feeling that this subject, in a peculiar manner addresses itself to the patronage and support of the Admiralty of England, and anxious that a measure so important to the cause of humanity and so in accordance with the best interests of a great maritime state, should receive its first impulse from the Government, and besustained by the Country of a generous people, I beg leave through you to offer my views to the consideration of their Lordships - and should they happily be honoured by their approbation I should feel much flattered by a communication, how far it might assist with the sentiments of their Honourable Board, that any of the primary measures for the establishment of such an institution should emanate from themselves, whether in conjunction with any other department, or if their Lordships would condescend to point out, if in any other measure such a system, and subject to those changes and modifications of which it was susceptible, would be likely to receive their concurrence and support Should there be any other circumstances Which their Lordships conceive could be Better elucidated by my personally waiting upon them, I shall be happy to attend to any appointment with which they may be pleased to honour me, or to receive your farther communications

I have the honour to be  
 Sir your most obedient  
 humble servant  
 Wm Hillary

Transcript of letter to the Admiralty, 11 September 1823  
 Courtesy: The National Archives

Written on and across this letter is the following suggested Admiralty response to Hillary's letter:

My Lords have considered his pamphlet and finding therein no precise information as to the means by which the object in question is to be affected my Lords can only say that while they wish success to any undertaking which has for its object the saving of the lives of mariners, they do not see how they can at present take any steps in this matter.



Source 13: Response to Sir William Hillary's letter to the Admiralty  
(continued – page 2)

On a copy of Hillary's original appeal pamphlet is a reply from an Admiralty official:

*I have run this over and  
I think what it advocates  
is worthy at least of consideration  
and should not be at once  
negative, though I should not  
deem at all necessary for the  
Admiralty to take any immediate lead*

FOR many years, and in various countries, the melancholy and fatal cases of shipwreck which I have witnessed, have excited a powerful interest in my mind for the situation of those who are exposed to this awful calamity; but the idea of the advantages which would result from the establishment of a national institution, for the preservation of human life from the perils of the sea, has only suggested itself to me since my residence on a part of the coast often exposed to the most distressing scenes of misery, and where the dreadful storms of the last autumn prevailed with unusual violence.

On some occasions, it has been my lot to witness the loss of many valuable lives, where, if there had been establishments previously formed for affording prompt relief, and encouragement given to those who might volunteer on such a cause, in all probability the greater part would

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Transcript of reply by an Admiralty official  
Courtesy: The National Archives

*I have run this over and I think  
what it advocates is worthy at least  
of consideration and should not be  
at once negative, though I should  
not deem at all necessary for the  
Admiralty to take any immediate lead  
with respect to it GC*

Extract from a copy of Sir William Hillary's  
appeal pamphlet with annotation by an  
Admiralty official  
Courtesy: The National Archives

Q

1. Why do you think the Admiralty didn't offer more support to Sir William Hillary's appeal?

2. What advantages and disadvantages can you think of for the Admiralty's involvement?