

## Source 17: Sir William Hillary's Gold Medal

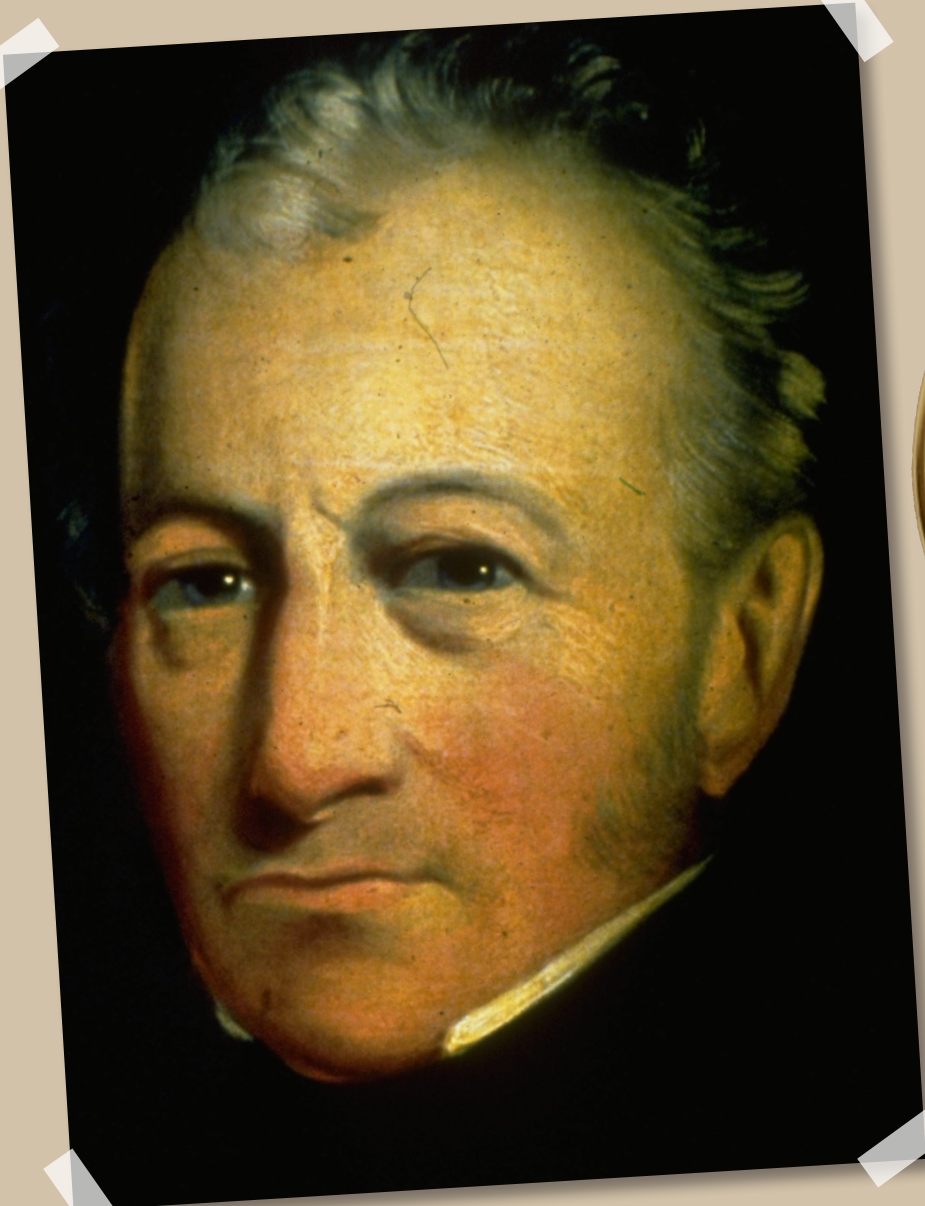
One of the six aims defined in Sir William Hillary's Appeal for the institution was to offer rewards to those who saved the lives of others from shipwreck or who assisted vessels in distress. He had seen the positive effect of doing so himself when he recruited volunteers to rescue the crew of HMS *Vigilant*.

The institution was to offer Gold and Silver Medals for Gallantry as such rewards. These medals were used as a symbol of the heroism of volunteers performing dangerous sea rescues. It was hoped that by providing this recognition volunteer crews would be attracted to the role of lifeboat crew.

Sir William Hillary's motto was 'with courage, nothing is impossible' and the determination he had shown in establishing the institution led him to be awarded a Gold Medal in March 1825.

The medal features an image of the institution's Chairman on one side, with a picture of three men pulling another from the sea alongside the quotation from Psalm 69: 'Let not the deep swallow me up' on the other.

Hillary was to be awarded three more Gold Medals, this time for his daring determination in rescues to the *Fortroendet* in 1827 and to the *Eclipse* and *St George*, both in 1830.



Sir William Hillary's Gold Medal, awarded 1825  
Courtesy: RNLI Heritage Trust

Sir William Hillary, founder of the RNLI  
Courtesy: RNLI Heritage Trust

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1. Why do you think rewards like medals are such an incentive to people to do good things?

2. What examples of organisations today have similar reward systems?

3. Using RNLI.org, what recent medals have been awarded to RNLI crew members and lifeguards for saving lives at sea?