## Source 6: The *Original* lifeboat

In 1789, a ship named Adventure ran ashore in the mouth of the River Tyne during a violent storm. The rough seas prevented local men from doing anything to save the crew with the boats they then had and many of the Adventure's crew drowned.

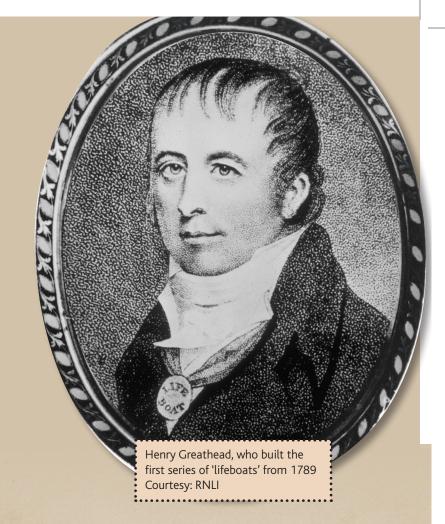
This disaster inspired The Gentlemen of Lawe-House, a group of local businessmen from South Shields, to place a newspaper advert for a competition to design a rescue boat to go out to shipwrecks. They offered a reward of 2 guineas [£2.10] for the successful design.

The competition received worthy entries from William Wouldhave and Henry Greathead but the group nevertheless decided neither design would be an outright winner. Instead, the committee used ideas from both and produced a final design for a lifeboat. They offered 1 guinea [£1.05] as a reward to Wouldhave, who took offence at having his prize-money halved and rejected his winnings. They asked Henry Greathead to build the design they had completed and thus Henry Greathead went on to become known as the inventor of the lifeboat.

His first lifeboat was aptly named Original. Over the following 2 decades, over 30 of Greathead's lifeboats were built for orders around Britain's coast and abroad. The images all show the series of Original lifeboats, the first type of boat known as a 'lifeboat'.

An extract from the Caledonian Mercury in 1801 shows not only the success of Greathead's lifeboats but how the British press supported the campaign to bring this valuable invention into general use.

Courtesy: RNLI





## Source 6: The Original lifeboat (continued – page 2)

## LIFE-BOAT.

We have formerly stated the fervices which have been done by Life Boats and their vast utility at sea-ports, &c. The following setter, addressed to Mr Henry Greathead, South Shields, tends to illustrate the advantages to be derived from them

SCARBOROUGH-November 17.

On Monday, the 2d of November, we were visited with a most dreadful storm from the westward, and I scarcely ever remember seeing a more tremendous sea. The Aurora, of Newcastle, in approaching the harbour, was driven about to the southward, and as she was in the most imminent danger, the life boat was immediately launched to her assistance. The place where the ship lay was exposed to the whole force of the sea; and she was surrounded with broken water, which dashed over her decks with considerable violence. In such a perilous situation

the life boat adventured and proceeded through the breach of the fea, rifing on the fummit of the waves, without shipping any water, excepting a little from the fpray; on going on the lee quarter of the vessel they were endangered by the main-boom, which had broken loofe, and was driving about with great force; this necessitated them to go alonglide the veffel, and they infantly took out four of the crew-but the fea which broke over the decks having nearly filled the boat with water, they were induced to pull off for a moment, when feeing three boys, the remainder of the crew, clinging to the rigging, and in danger of perifing, they immediately returned and took them into the boat, and brought the whole to land in fafety. By the means of the life-boat built from your plan, and the exertions of the boatmen, seven men and boys were thus saved to their country and their friends, and preferved from that inevitable destruction which otherwise awaited them. The boat was not the least affected by the water which broke into her when alongfide the verici, and indeed the boatmen thought it rendered her more fleady in the fea. I muit also add, that it was the general opinion, that no other boat, of the common construction, could have possibly performed the service; and the fishermen, though very adventurous, declared they would not have made the attempt in their own boats.

We have appointed a crew of fishermen to manage the boat, under the direction of the committee; and the men are so much satisfied with the performances of the boat, and so consident in her safety, that they are emboldened to adventure on the most dangerous occasions.

I have been thus circumstantial, to shew the

I have been thus circumstantial, to shew the great utility of the life-boat, and I should think it would be rendering an effectial benefit to the community, if any recommendation of mine should contribute to bring this valuable invention into more general use. I remain, Sir, &c.

THOS. HINDERWELL.



1. Why was the competition launched to design a rescue boat?

2. In the rescue off Scarborough in 1801, reported in the *Caledonian Mercury*, why were the crew of fishermen in the lifeboat so impressed with the design?

3. What impact would this new lifeboat have had on the wider campaign to improve lifesaving at sea?