

'Money for old rope'

The title stems from the fact that any rope and gear replaced is sold to the life-boat crew by the inspector for a small sum. The money, of course, goes to the RNLI.

'MONEY FOR OLD ROPE' : Draft synopsis

Ch 1 A flying start As submitted

Ch 2 On passage to station As submitted

Ch 3 On the coast

In the RNLI head office the expression 'On the coast' has a proud and perhaps envious ring to it which is reflected in this chapter. The paid staff on the coast are to some extent looked upon as front line troops almost on a par with the life-boatmen themselves. Here are some of the incidents resulting from visits to life-boat stations and exercising boats afloat. The dealings with the often self-centred and individualistic committees and crews and the rigid discipline of taking a life-boat to sea on the wildest winter day.

Ch 4 Wrecks and rescues

The rescues which hit the headlines are not always the most thrilling. This chapter tells the story of some of the best rescues with the added interest of a knowledge of the men concerned and their invariable modesty and quiet courage. The ever controversial question of salvage is discussed, not only from the point of view of the life-boatmen but also that of the yachtsman, underwriters and other interested parties. There is also some advice on how to avoid becoming a marine casualty.

Ch 5 The day of disaster

The worst day for an inspector of life-boats is the one on which he learns of a disaster to one of his boats and receives instructions to proceed immediately and investigate. The Mumbles life-boat was lost with all hands off Sker point, Glamorgan in 1947 and the tragic story is retold here from vivid memories that the years have not dimmed. Other disasters and the train of events leading to them are described and discussed frankly. The quiet fortitude of wives and families of the drowned men offers a lesson in dignified human behaviour.

Ch 6 Discovering Ireland

The fact that the RNLI provide, maintain and administer the life-boat stations in the Irish

republic is not generally realised and this rather unusual relationship does produce some interesting situations. It can well be imagined that the sturdy independance of life-boatmen in general strikes an answering chord here. If some of the incidents described appear to fall between the uncanny and the frankly ridiculous it can only be insisted that they happened as related. Who but an Irish priest would entertain you to a lunch consisting of a bottle of Irish whiskey ? Somehow or other Ireland leads to Orkney where the other sort of whisky has its adherents.

Ch 7 Diplomatic duties

Every four years an International Life-boat Conference is held, a different country acting as host each time. The 1,000 mile round trip of an RNLI boat to Bremen and some of the adventures on the way are described; also the muster of many foreign life-boats at Edinburgh in 1963 when the RNLI was the host. Naming ceremonies of new boats and some of the difficulties involved may prove surprising. Other conferences and ceremonies together with speaking engagements tax the versatility of the most experienced inspector of life-boats. He gets his beard, if not his leg, pulled.

Ch 8 The wind is veering

Working as assistant chief inspector brings a complete change of job, varying from dealing with all the reports of life-boat services to trials of new boats and some trouble-shooting on the coast. A fire destroys the new Thurso life-boats and leads to an interesting investigation. The great upsurge of sea sports of all kinds produces new problems which affect the rescue services of nearly all countries. The pros and cons of some sort of control of yachting and boating activities and the methods used abroad are discussed and criticised from varying points of view. The future development of rescue craft and techniques is suggested.