

'Women of the RNLI' by Wendy Richards Wood in Exmouth Pavilion on 10th November 2022

An audience of 150 in the Pavilion and 23 via 'Zoom' welcomed Wendy Richards Wood, a Volunteer Community Presenter for Teignmouth RNLI to the regular u3a monthly meeting in Exmouth Pavilion on 10th November. Wendy is currently the only presenter in the region who can offer a talk on the role of women in the RNLI and by the end of the presentation the audience were definitely well aware of the important and essential role of the RNLI and the contributions of women.

Wendy emphasised the role of the RNLI, 95% of whom are volunteers: 'The RNLI do all they can to save everyone, without judgement or preference.' An important message to convey with many different reasons for rescuing and assisting people at sea including migrants.

Across the years women had played a significant role, including Grace Darling who is commemorated at the Grace Darling Museum in Bamburgh. Wendy told the dramatic tale of Grace's tremendous feat in rescuing nine survivors from the wrecked SS Forfarshire in 1838.

Bringing us right up to date Wendy highlighted the role of women today with examples of women such as Di Bush of Harwich as the first full time woman coxswain for the RNLI. Also the bravery of women such as Carolina Clements RNLI Lifeguard who rescued six people; three swimmers and three surfers from a possible rip tide disaster in Scarborough.



Photo of Wendy Richards Wood and Christine Chittock by Maurice Chittock

Fundraising remains essential for the RNLI and Wendy highlighted the ways in which people could help, from legacies, donations, supporting RNLI shops and merchandise and much more. At the end of a wonderful presentation Wendy said: "Don't worry if you haven't got cash, as I have a card reader!" Christine Chittock, Chairperson thanked Wendy for an excellent and inspirational presentation and wasn't surprised to see many u3a members keen to ask questions and to make both cash and card donations. Following the presentation Wendy asked for her thanks to be extended to Exmouth and District u3a for such a warm welcome and response to her talk. "The group donation together with individual donations raised an amazingly generous £385.53! All of which will go to the RNLI's purpose of Saving Lives at Sea. Thank you so much."

With many thanks to Ann Newby, Speakers' Coordinator for liaising with Wendy Richards Wood

Review by Christine Chittock, Chairperson