



## NCI Gwennap Head – Incidents and News 2021

### Jan-Feb

- Lockdown

### Mar-Apr

- Lockdown

### May-Jun

- When the fog is down, we sometimes get asked "why are you watching when you can't see anything?". Whilst it is true that the Mk1 Eyeball is hard to beat, technology gives us a hand when the weather is getting in the way! Today (zero visibility fog), our AIS system registered an alert from a yacht 7 or 8 miles offshore (see example below). These AIS SAR alerts are generated from small portable [relatively cheap] transceivers carried aboard craft (or even worn). When triggered, they generate alerts on local AIS systems, which also carry id and positional information to help SAR services contact and - if necessary - deploy to the vessel/individual generating the alert.

In this case, our watchkeeper immediately contacted Falmouth coastguard and passed on the vessel and location details. Falmouth then contacted the yacht and established that the beacon had been accidentally activated (these things happen!) and all was well. They also contacted our watchkeeper to thank them for the prompt report and accurate plotting of the incident (which actually appeared on the Gwennap Head AIS system first, due to the yacht being local to us).

- Watchkeeper Eric Taylor received an award from the Royal Yachting Association for the years he has spent as a volunteer instructor, training people to handle boats of all types, safely and professionally.. What with his work at Penzance Sailing Club and 30 years as a very active fundraiser for the RNLI, goodness knows how he also finds time to be a very committed long-serving Gwennap Head watchkeeper, as well.

Nick Downing, rear commodore of training at Penzance Sailing Club praised Eric, saying "He's also a great ambassador for the sport of sailing, and we're very lucky to have him."...we know the feeling. Congratulations Eric.

### Jul-Aug

- [NCI Gwennap Head](#) Station Manager Ian Vinnicombe appeared on the [BBC Radio Cornwall](#) Breakfast Show this morning talking all things National Coastwatch Institution and National Coastwatch Day. You can listen to the full interview on BBC Sounds, here at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09t7srx>
- During yesterday afternoon's watch, a gentleman knocked on our door asking for help, after his wife fell and badly injured her leg, on the coastal footpath, very close to our station. Grabbing his VHF radio, our watchkeeper immediately assessed the situation and contacted both the ambulance service (who dispatched the Cornwall Air Ambulance to our [remote] location) and Coastguard (who sent the Land End Coastguard Search & Rescue Team to assist). He then stayed with the casualty, monitoring her condition, whilst also providing support and reassurance, until the emergency services arrived. The casualty was made as comfortable as



# National Coastwatch

## EYES ALONG THE COAST

possible and, after discussions, was evacuated to their own vehicle, down in the cove, for onward transportation to hospital.

A special mention goes to Karin, our newly-qualified (just one week!) watchkeeper, who lives very close by and saw the incident unfold. Understanding that our duty watchkeeper was fully occupied in caring for the casualty, she immediately 'stepped up', came to the station, and took over watch routines until our watchkeeper was able to return and pick up where he'd left off. Quick thinking and very impressive for someone who'd only been qualified for 7 days!

- **NCI GWENNAP HEAD LAUNCHES ITS NEW 50/50 CLUB** Please Help To Support Us In Our Vital Work. Because of the Covid-19 situation, fundraising during the last two years has been very challenging for us and, consequently, our income has been severely reduced. That being the case, NCI Gwennap Head is pleased to announce the launch of our new 50/50 Club; a great way to raise crucial funds for our station, whilst offering FOUR great opportunities a year, to win THREE super cash prizes! For just £12 per year, your ticket enters you into each of the four draws to be held in October, January, April and July, with 50% of all the money raised from ticket sales going towards supporting our work AND the other 50% going to the prize fund. So, what are the prizes?

1st Prize – 60% of the prize fund,  
2nd Prize – 25% of the prize fund,  
3rd Prize – 15% of the prize fund

And there is no limit to the number of tickets you can buy, thus giving you multiple chances to win a prize at each draw.

- **In Memory of Colin Keith** As our more regular followers will probably know, the feed from our old weather station has, of late, been [to put it mildly] erratic. Unfortunately, it finally failed a few months ago and, as a result of the lockdowns and their impact on our fund-raising, there was no prospect of replacing it. However, Margaret Keith, one of our long-standing watchkeepers, in memory of her husband Colin, made us a very generous donation covering the entire cost of purchasing a top-of-the-line Davis VP2 weather station. We are very grateful to you, Margaret, and you can be sure that, whether the weather is fine and sunny, or cold, wet and windy, we will always remember Colin every time we use it.

Our weather station is on-line 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The data is publicly available and anyone who wants to know what the weather is like in our vicinity can access it in one of three ways:

- Go to the main Weatherlink portal ([www.weatherlink.com](http://www.weatherlink.com)), create a FREE account and search for NCI Gwennap Head (or select it from the Map tab) to get our weather feed
- Download the mobile app (iOS or Android), create a FREE account (or use one which you have already created, elsewhere) and search for NCI Gwennap Head to get our weather feed on your mobile device
- Go to our web site ([www.nci.org.uk/gwennaphead](http://www.nci.org.uk/gwennaphead)) and select the Weather Conditions NCI Gwennap Head tab (or go to the tab directly at [www.nci.org.uk/stations/weather-conditions-nci-gwennap-head](http://www.nci.org.uk/stations/weather-conditions-nci-gwennap-head))

Once again, we are very grateful to Margaret for enabling us to continue bringing you Gwennap Head weather reports, all day and every day.



## Sept-Oct

- The inshore tidal current between Porthcurno and Lands End is a dangerous beast – depending on where it is in the cycle, it turns from East to West and speeds up from 1 knot to 5 knots. This is far too strong for inflatables and their like to paddle against and brings the risk of sweeping the craft out beyond Lands End, into the Celtic Sea.

On Saturday, just before the end of morning watch (and just when the Westward current was at its strongest!), our watchkeeper heard a VHF Mayday Relay from Falmouth Coastguard, about 2 kayakers in difficulties, in front of Gwennap Head, caught in the strong tidal flow and being swept out to sea. This was immediately followed by a phone call from Falmouth asking if we could spot the kayakers, on a specific bearing. Following a visual search, our watchkeeper reported no sighting but suggested that it was common for kayakers to ‘hug’ the cliff line and, as such, they might be hidden from our view. Falmouth requested that our watchkeeper maintained observation whilst both the Sennen Cove lifeboats were tasked to the area (Coastguard Rescue 924 and the Lands End Cliff Rescue Team were also tasked to assist, if necessary).

A visitor then knocked on our front door and informed our watchkeeper that they had seen two kayakers who appeared to be in trouble. With the visitor’s information (kayaks are very small objects in a very large sea!), our watchkeeper was then able to locate the kayakers as being in the vicinity of the Runnel Stone buoy (not precisely where the original report had suggested) and relay this information to Falmouth. In the meantime, the Sennen Cove lifeboats had arrived and were commencing a search. Our watchkeeper contacted them via VHF radio and was then able to quickly direct them to the kayakers position. In this, they were aided by the arrival of our afternoon watchkeeper who took up a position on the cliff edge and maintained a constant visual marker as to the kayakers real-time position.

The kayakers were taken aboard the Sennen AWLB where they were found to be cold but otherwise unhurt. The ILB took the kayak in tow and both lifeboats returned the casualties and their kayak to Porthcurno where they were transferred to the beach and into the care of the RNLI lifeguards. Our morning watchkeeper then, somewhat belatedly, finally managed to hand his watch over to his afternoon colleague and departed for a late lunch!

Excellent cooperation between the local SAR services produced a good outcome to a situation that could have played out very differently given the strength of the inshore current at that point in time. If you’re going out on the water, please make sure that you’re aware of local tidal conditions. Just because it looks relatively calm on the surface, doesn’t mean that all will be plain sailing (or paddling!)

## Nov - Dec

- Off-duty NCI Gwennap Head watchkeeper Lynn W was making her way to the watch station via the coast path from Porthgwarra when she quickly had to respond to a land-based cry for help. As she neared the top of the path she suddenly heard some frantic cries for help, from a nearby area of land, by some cottages. Only pausing en route to encourage/persuade/grab a local resident (who had not heard the shouts) to join her, Lynn led the way to where an elderly man had fallen into a bonfire that he had been tending, from which he’d been unable to remove himself! Together, they were able to help him out and to regain his feet before the flames reached him. Thankfully, he was none the worse for his misfortune, but it is clear that had Lynn not heard and/or responded to his calls, it is likely that the story would have a very different ending