

The Life Boat



On 30th January 1790 a lifeboat went out on her first rescue mission. She was called the *Original* and she was the first lifeboat ever made. The *Original* was stationed at South Shields. On her first mission she rescued some sailors who were shipwrecked at a dangerous place called Herd Sand. You can see what the *Original* looked like in the old picture. There was a competition for a lifeboat design. Then the *Original* was built. She was not exactly the same as the competition entries. She had some ideas from one entry and some from another. Most boats have a rudder to steer with. You can see that the *Original* has no rudder. It is steered by an oar at the back. The shape is specially designed. If the middle of the boat fills with water, the back and front still stay out of the water. The boat was covered in cork which was fastened on with copper plates. This made it float well. A curved keel made it easier to steer in rough conditions. The boat could be rowed in either direction. If you find South Shields and Herd Sand on a map you will be able to imagine what a dangerous area this was for sailors. The Royal National Lifeboat Institute still does good work today. Do you know where is the nearest RNLI lifeboat station to your home?¹

¹ You can find the answer here: <https://rnli.org/find-my-nearest/lifeboat-stations>