

Rescue at Sea

This is a true story and it happened on the 5th June 1956.

It was a wild stormy day. A boat had run aground just off Hayling Island near to the entrance to Chichester Harbour. See if you can find Chichester and the harbour on a map. The Royal Air Force at Thorney Island received a message for help and immediately a helicopter was sent out to try and rescue the crew.

It was very windy. The pilot had trouble trying to control the helicopter. When they arrived over the boat, the pilot held the helicopter in position while the other man on board (called the navigator) lowered a rescue harness on the end of a cable. The waves were so high and strong that the man and the woman on the boat could not catch the harness. It kept swinging away from them as they tried to reach for it.

Then, a very strong gust came and wrapped the harness and its cable around the mast. The helicopter and the boat were tied together! The navigator quickly got an axe and cut the cable before the rolling boat pulled the helicopter into the sea.

While the helicopter carried on circling around the boat, the pilot radioed for help. Another helicopter came to help and this time a young man, aged only 18 was on board with the pilot. His name was Raymond Martin. As they reached the wrecked boat, the pilot of the new helicopter decided that there was only one way to rescue the crew on the boat. Raymond Martin must strap the harness on himself and be lowered onto the boat. Then he could secure the couple into the harness one at a time, staying on the yacht himself until they were safe. And this is what he did.

As he stood on the rolling deck he could see that the man was in a worse condition than his wife and so he helped him into the

harness first. He waved to the pilot to pull him slowly up. The helicopter then had to fly the man back to Thorney Island first before coming back to rescue the lady.

To make sure that she didn't fall into the sea, he tied her to the rigging. When the boat nearly went right over, he decided to tie himself to the rigging as well. It seemed like ages before they heard the helicopter returning. Once it was back, he caught the harness and secured the woman in it.

Once she was safely in the helicopter, the harness was lowered again and this time Martin buckled it on himself. As he was lifted up to the helicopter he was very relieved to be safe. In minutes they were back to Thorney Island.

Later, Raymond Martin was awarded the George Medal for bravery.

