**Happenings at Prawle Point Lookout 2016/17.**

It has been a busy time at the Lookout this past year upgrading the equipment and refurbishing the building. The exterior has been completely re painted and two double glazed windows replaced and a part of the roof replaced due to storm damage. The lookout takes a heavy battering from the winter storms with winds up to 90mph causing the windows to flex and eventually the seals fail causing condensation to form in the cavity. This reduces visibility considerably and requires replacing as soon as possible. Fortunately we have a company that will carry out this work in what is a fairly remote location. Also they have a Land Rover to transport the windows that weighs between 70 and 90 Kilos!

The painting was completed in a dry but windy period by a team of Watchkeepers who worked hard and finished each day liberally spattered with paint. No complaints but the regular supply of tea and cake probably helped.

Fund raising for the Lookout is a constant task carried out by a dedicated team without whom we would not be able to function or to have the equipment we need to carry out our role effectively. After a 18 months of serious fundraising a new state-of-the-art radar has replaced the old radar at the Lookout. The introduction of this radar technology will enable us to identify and track vessels and guide the Lifeboat to casualties quickly and easily. This can be done without having to venture into deeper rarely used menu systems as was the case with the old radar. The sensitivity of the new radar means that even a paddle boarder up to 2nm away can be detected utilising the zoom and synchronise function. Once located the bearing and range from any point or vessel to the paddle boarder can be displayed. All of this can be achieved quickly and simply. The Watchkeepers are now quite used to using the radar and it is becoming a valuable tool in our role at PQ.

With the closure of Brixham Coastguard we now coordinate with Solent Coastguard in the event of any incident in our area. This is working well and we are developing a good working relationship with them. So far this year we have responded to or initiated 12 incidents in our area involving Coastguard or Lifeboat all with successful outcomes. In addition we have reported a number of dolphin and porpoise sightings and three humpback whale sightings. In 2016 we had 52 incidents.

We have a dedicated radio channel (CH65) that vessels can call for information on sea conditions, weather, radio checks or other assistance. This is being used more and more by boats in our area to check on conditions prior to going around Prawle Point or venturing out of Salcombe. As from the beginning of June this year we now broadcast the local sea and weather conditions 5 times a day on CH65.

Watchkeepers are the eyes and ears along the coast, keeping a visual watch, monitoring radio channels, using radar and providing a listening and radar watch in poor visibility. A log is maintained of all identified vessels, noting bearing, distance and heading. The work is mainly routine but Watchkeepers are trained to act in an emergency, report to the Coastguard and if required co-ordinate with the search and rescue services. We have a waiting list of potential volunteers so the number of Watchkeepers will remain constant which is vital for us. It is also good to note that we now have more Watchkeepers from Prawle and that we will have sufficient Watchkeepers for the future.