

HENRY BLOGG OF CROMER



Bust of Henry Blogg outside the North Lodge council offices in Cromer.

Henry Blogg of Cromer

The Greatest of the Lifeboat-men

by

Cyril Jolly



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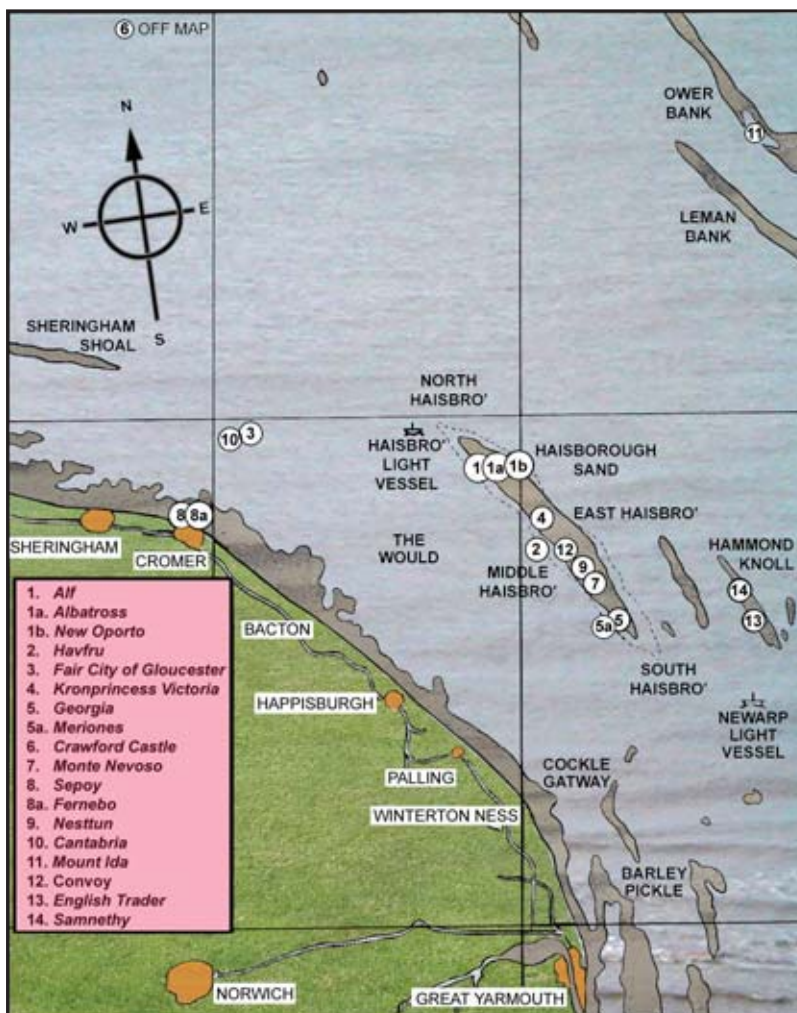
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Map showing the position of wrecks mentioned in the book.



Preface to the new edition

Cyril Jolly's biography of Henry Blogg was first published by Harrap and Co in 1958, and was then reprinted by Harrap in 1974 and later by the author himself. We're delighted that Mrs Hilda Jolly has approved a new edition of the book, particularly as we approach the 50th anniversary of Henry Blogg's death and the bicentenary of the lifeboat station at Cromer in 2004.

We have taken the opportunity to make some minor amendments to the text, mostly of style, to reflect the years that have passed since the first edition. However we have endeavoured not to change the text so that it sounds as if it is written today – for instance, the reference to today's modern lifeboat at Cromer is still to the lifeboat *Henry Blogg*, which was retired from service in the town in 1966. A panel on page 23 gives some of the principal developments to the lifeboat service at Cromer since the first edition in 1958.

We have included a number of photographs not in the original edition where they help illustrate the story. We are particularly grateful to the RNLI for permission to use the two paintings associated with Cox'n Blogg, and to Adrian Vicary who maintains the Maritime Photo Library started by his father Philip. Philip Vicary faithfully recorded the lifeboat story at Cromer throughout much of the twentieth century. Wherever possible we have gone back

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to original copies of the photographs, but unfortunately it has not always been possible to find such prints. The photographs attributed to the Keystone Press Agency and the *Eastern Daily Press* have been reproduced from an earlier printing of the book; the publishers would be delighted to hear from anyone with original photographic prints of these pictures for use in future printings and at the Henry Blogg Lifeboat Museum.

Cyril Jolly wrote a number of books recalling aspects of Norfolk's history. We must all be grateful that he took the opportunity to interview men like Second Cox'n Jack Davies who had served with Henry Blogg from the last days of the nineteenth century through to the middle of the twentieth century. Hardly a month passes when some part of Blogg's story is not told in a local newspaper or national magazine article. Cyril Jolly's book is a key source for those stories and in it we know we are listening to men and women who were there with Cromer's greatest son - Henry Blogg of Cromer: The Greatest of the Lifeboatmen.

Author's Preface

There may be some truth in the saying that Norfolk people have one foot on land and the other in the sea. Certainly, I have spent many, many hours along its coast. But although I have known Cromer since I was a boy, it was not until a few years ago, when I was on holiday there, that I resolved, 'I will ask Henry Blogg if he will give me his life story.' I never did: he seemed such an immense figure - an Everest among men - that I dared not approach him.

My cowardice made no difference, for he would not have talked anyway!

Since then I have found out much about him from records and his friends - but I wish I knew what he thought about the big things of life. What strong current made him hazard his life a hundred times in the service of humanity? Was it ambition, bravado or a true love of his fellow men? Did he believe there was a purpose for the voyage of life and maybe a harbour below the horizon? I do not know and I doubt if anyone else does. He was clam-like on small things - how much more so on the things even talkative people rarely mention.

Certainly there were great depths to his character and although he was not a churchgoer, I believe Henry Blogg had a strong faith in God. I suppose it is hard to spend hours in a small boat far from land, with only the sea and the stars, without believing in

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God. He said that Providence saved them on Hammond Knoll, but I am not sure if he knew where to look for comfort when life hit him so hard and so often. I do know that this Norfolk fisherman, who scoffed at ease and safety and gave the best of himself for sixty years to save life, was a big man. Apart from his daring and his leadership, his exemplary seamanship and his modesty, above all and beyond all, Henry Blogg was a truly noble man.

I wish to thank the Royal National Lifeboat Institution for permission to use reports in the *Journal*; E. P. Hansell, honorary secretary of the Cromer Branch RNLI, for access to local records; J. J. Davies, Tom Allen and Mrs J. W. Davies, of Cromer; Martin van der Hidde, of Rotterdam; Charles Vince, ex-publicity secretary of the RNLI; Alec Jackson, Henry Murrell and 'Jimmy' Dumble, ex-coxswain of Sheringham lifeboat, for their assistance.

I am indebted to the Norfolk News Company Ltd, for permission to use reports in the *Eastern Daily Press*, Sir Thomas Cook JP for reports in the Norfolk Chronicle, Rounce and Wortley Ltd, for reports in the *Norfolk Chronicle*, *Cromer Post* and A. C. Savin's *History of Cromer*. I am also grateful to George G. Harrap and Co Ltd, for the use of an extract from *Heroes of British Lifeboats*, by Gerda Shairer and Egon Jameson, and to Miss M. Caldwell, of Dereham, for reading the manuscript.

For the invaluable help so willingly given by Henry T. Davies, coxswain of Cromer lifeboat, and his wife I am more than thankful.

C. J.
Gressenhall, Norfolk
1958

The *Fernebo*

THE FIRST of a series of spectacular sea rescues which made the name of Coxswain Henry Blogg famous throughout the world was the service he and his Cromer lifeboat crew gave to the Swedish ship *Fernebo*.

Many a man has good reason to remember the winter of 1917, for it was one of the worst in the records. Tuesday, January 9, the day on which the *Fernebo* struck, was the worst of that terrible winter. A fierce gale, blowing at 50 miles an hour from the north-east, was pushing the waters of the North Sea on to the north Norfolk coast, making a perilous lee shore for shipping. It was just such conditions as these that had earned this part of the coast the nickname 'Devil's Throat', and had for centuries littered its shores with the bones of many ships.

Blinding squalls of hail and sleet had added further horrors to the fury of the wind and the sea. Throughout the previous night the gale had torn limbs from trees and slates from roofs and the hail had rattled like small shot on window-panes, as though challenging the inmates to leave their homes, while the dawn brought no relief.

Suddenly, above the noise of the storm, came the ominous burst of the rocket signal. No one was surprised, for this was 'lifeboat weather', and during the night both coastguard and Henry Blogg had been watching a small steamer, the Greek ship *Pyrin*,

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trying to ride out the gale in the roadstead off Cromer. Since daylight the coxswain had been to the top of the cliff two or three times, fearing, with good cause, that before long the ship would be in grave difficulty. Just after 11 a.m. the wind-buffeted watchers saw her run up the signal, 'Am drifting. Require assistance.'

As the townsfolk heard the rockets they shuddered at the thought of the crew of their lifeboat, the *Louisa Heartwell*, going out in such appalling conditions. A man did not have to be faint-hearted to flinch at those waves, which followed one another in fury to crash against the groynes with a violence that flung the tons of water skyward, only to fall back and add further to the confusion.

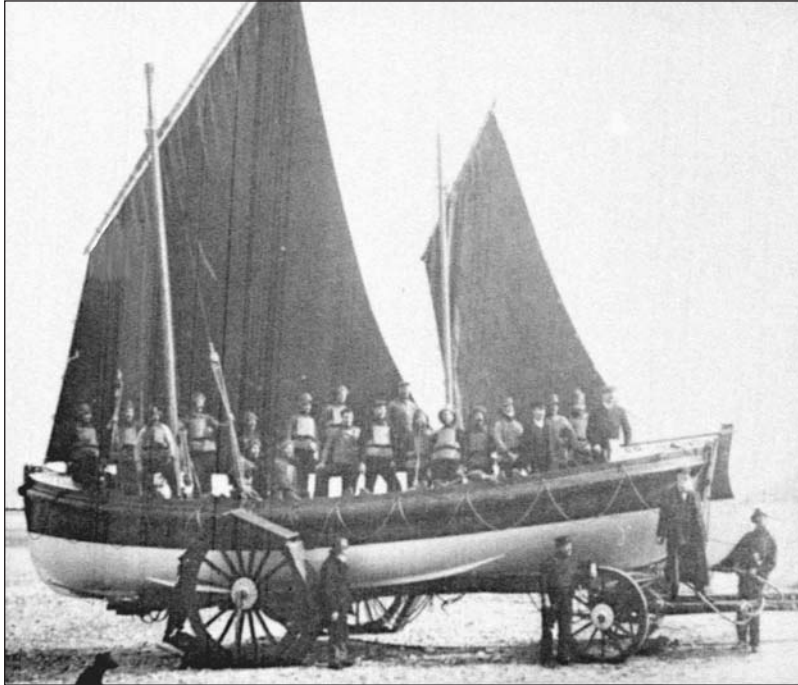
Before the sound of the second signal had died away some of the lifeboat-men were dashing towards the boathouse on the east gangway. They had to be off the mark as quickly as firemen, for a lost minute could mean a lost life. Some already wore their sea-boots; those who did not left it to their relatives to grab them up, fling a coat over their shoulders and bring them to the boathouse.

Before Henry Blogg reached the gangway he knew what a grim struggle lay ahead, for the tide was almost out and there were more than a hundred yards of difficult beach between his lifeboat and the water, where a fierce fight in a boiling surf was inevitable.

The ship in trouble was just two miles off Cromer. Not far, perhaps, on a summer day, but in the teeth of that gale, pitting oars against such seas, two miles was a very long way.

The boathouse was a tangle of men and equipment as the crew struggled into lifebelts and oilskins. Outside, forty willing launchers, including many soldiers billeted in the town, had arrived and were running out the ropes with which they would drag the boat across the sands. Others were taking up positions against the shafts at the rear of the carriage, to push the heavy craft into the sea.

The thirty-eight-foot-long *Louisa Heartwell* was of the Liverpool type. She was as big a boat as could be got on to a carriage,



The Louisa Heartwell, a Liverpool class lifeboat, was Cromer's only lifeboat from 1902 to 1923 and was then at Cromer No 2 station for a further nine years. Henry Blogg was her second cox'n until 1909, when he became cox'n.

but she was needed to work under sail to Haisborough Sands – twelve miles out. The lighter Norfolk-and-Suffolk type of boat, ideal where there was a rapidly shelving beach which enabled the boat to go straight into deep water, was no good at Cromer, where the violence of the surf on the flat beach made a light boat too dangerous to launch. The extra effort needed to get the big, heavier boat launched can easily be imagined. The *Louisa Heartwell* was, however, a fine boat and had done yeoman service at this danger-point to navigators. This was to be her great day – a day which would always couple her name with the *Fernebo* in what Commander Basil Hall, RNLI Inspector, called 'one of the most gallant rescues in the annals of the Lifeboat Service'.

Big as she looked in her house, the *Louisa Heartwell* seemed a puny thing against the breakers that were thundering on the shore. Her carvel-built hull looked wonderfully stout, yet those



The lifeboat house at the foot of the Gangway, from a hand-coloured lantern slide. The boathouse had been rebuilt to house the Louisa Heartwell and was officially opened in September 1902.

seas could crush her like an eggshell if they caught her unprepared. But she was game for the service – game as her crew and her launchers.

Led by the head launcher, Tom ‘Bussey’ Allen, the strong, eager men pushed and pulled at shafts and ropes and heaved at the wheel-spokes as the boat was set in motion. Shouting, laughing and swearing, Tom encouraged them as, helped by her own weight, the boat ran down the slope and on to the sands, where the launchers hauled and heaved like madmen in their effort to keep up her momentum.

There was not one launcher too many, for the wind checked the heavy boat and the wide iron wheel-plates of the laden carriage sank into the wet sand, demanding every ounce of strength the men could exert. It was a gruelling test, as there was a low bank of sand to be crossed and it looked as formidable as a range of hills. It was the first obstacle the sea had provided against the rescue of the men on board the *Pyrin*. Heaving and pushing with

all their might, these stout-hearted launchers got the boat to the surf and the leading man on each rope was into the water, first to his knees and then to his waist. But before she could be got afloat a great wave caught and pushed her back, flinging the men on the ropes in all directions.

As the launchers again went deep into the water, with the salt spray half blinding them, they were pushed back once more and knocked sideways. They rallied and struggled on. Then, when the boat was at last deep enough to pull the launching-ropes and shoot her into the water and the crew were ready with oars poised, a huge wave flung her back again, scattering the launchers. Only by clinging to the ropes did many save themselves from drowning. Three times this happened, but suddenly the coxswain saw a chance and, taking their cue from him with skill gained by many a battle with the sea, the launchers snatched it and the *Louisa Heartwell* was afloat. The time was then about 11.40 a.m.

The second phase of the struggle was left to the crew of seventeen. Pulling with all their might, two men to each oar, they gained yard by yard, but could not prevent the wind and current from dragging them sideways towards a new danger.

Henry Blogg exhorted and instructed his crew, trying with every trick of seamanship he knew to counter that crabwise drift. But to the onlookers it seemed certain that the boat, so courageously launched, was doomed to be smashed against her own pier.

In groups on the cliffs, the promenade and the beach hundreds of shivering, rain-soaked men and women breathlessly watched the struggle. Then, when it looked as though only a miracle could save her, the *Louisa Heartwell* cleared the pier by a few yards. One could almost feel the release of tension as the townsfolk saw that another danger had been averted.

A smother of hail and spray hid the lifeboat for minutes on end and when the watchers, protecting their strained eyes with cupped hands, again saw the *Louisa Heartwell* she had hoisted a sail and was beating up towards the *Pyrin*.

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The crew were barely conscious of the stinging hail, for the icy spray whipped up by the gale was flung continuously over the open boat. They pulled and pushed the heavy oars, jarred by each blow of the sea and thrown about by the steep pitching of their boat. At one moment they were climbing a great wall of water at an angle that threatened to shoot every man backward into the sea; the next, the boat had tipped into the trough of the seas, almost standing on her bows.

Progress was slow, but at 2 p.m., after three hours of back- and spirit-breaking effort, they had reached the *Pyrin*. The fine effort had its reward, for sixteen men were taken into the *Louisa Heartwell* and the stricken ship was left for the sea to toss contemptuously on the beach the next day.

The journey back to Cromer was much less strenuous, for with the roaring gale behind them they had to have the drogue out to steady them. Half an hour later they had landed the *Pyrin's* crew.

The relief of the rescued at getting ashore was almost equalled by the relief the rescuers felt to be safely back after that gruelling contest. With their oilskins flapping in the gale, they clasped the hands of their friends as they ran into the surf to help in the landing. Then they made their way through the excited crowd to the boat-house, to shed their wet clothes, while Tom Allen, soaked to the neck, was organising the launchers to get the boat on skeats and then on to its carriage.

The crew were in an exhausted state, for the average age exceeded fifty and some of the members were nearly seventy years of age. Two and a half years of war had drawn away the younger men to the Navy and merchant fleet, leaving only the older men to man the boat.

But it had been a good day's work and now it was over they could relax and enjoy the steaming cocoa that brought back feeling to their numb bodies.

Their relief was short-lived, however, for hardly had they got into their dry clothes ready for the return home when a message came that the storm had put another ship in jeopardy. The Swed-

ish ship *Fernebo* was in great difficulty three to four miles out.

The immediate reaction was that the Cromer crew could not aid her. They were too exhausted and some other lifeboat must go. Then came the news that the only other boats within reach could not be launched owing to the appalling conditions. Every effort had been made but all attempts had been unavailing. That meant that if help was to reach the *Fernebo* it must come from Cromer, or the crew would perish.

When he received the message Henry Blogg looked at his crew and knew that he must put it to them. In a few blunt sentences he told them how things stood. He was ready to go, he said and he believed his crew would want to go with him. The exhausted men saw the need and, tired as they were, battered as some of them had been, they were prepared to face that howling gale again. Even as they nodded or growled their readiness they knew that conditions were even worse than in the morning, for the tide was higher. But, having already achieved the seemingly impossible that day under Blogg, there was fire in their hearts. They would follow if Henry Blogg would lead.

They struggled back into their wet oilskins and cork lifebelts, tied their cold sou'westers under their chins and started the grim battle all over again.

The spirit of Cromer's lifeboat-men is shown in a dozen magnificent rescues while Henry Blogg was coxswain, but at no time did a crew show a finer spirit of sacrifice and duty than when those exhausted, ageing men faced that wild sea for the second time in a few hours.

On board the *Fernebo* two of the crew were attending to their thirty-two-year-old chief engineer, Johan Anderson, of Gothenburg, who had been injured when the steamer first got into difficulties. They brought him up from the engine-room to his cabin and were attending to his wounds when a heavy explosion threw them across the cabin. As, bruised and shocked, they scrambled up on deck to see what had happened there was a terrifying sound of rending iron and wood as the ship broke her back. The injured man was never seen alive again.

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Entirely out of control and at the mercy of the storm, the Swedish ship had struck a mine. The explosion amidships split the ship in halves and as the onlookers watched they saw the two halves drift apart in a swirl of smoke and steam. Big seas tossed and hit them, but they neither listed nor sank, for the *Fernebo* was stacked with timber, which kept them buoyant.

Again there was no lack of launchers, for news that another vessel was in distress had spread through the town, and the shore and cliffs were soon lined with crowds of excited people ready to face hail and wind to see what they sensed would be a magnificent struggle. Warm homes and shelter from that Arctic wind were forgotten as they stood, soaked and shivering, looking down on Henry Blogg and his crew as they grappled with one of the worst seas they had ever known off Cromer. Even to this day old and middle-aged men proudly claim, 'I was there. I saw the *Fernebo*.'

As expected, the launching was worse than before and every effort seemed to be useless. The seas were so mountainous that even when the lifeboat was afloat the tired crew, with three fresh members, could not get her clear of the breakers. She was driven relentlessly back on to the shore, and wave following wave overpowered the oarsmen. One rearing sea caught the heavy boat as if she were a toy and hurled her right on to the beach. The sea had won the first round and the bruised crew sprawled half collapsed over their oars as the breakers continued their relentless pounding of the foreshore.

The men were helped by willing hands to the boathouse, while the *Louisa Heartwell* was dragged up the beach. The sense of defeat weighed upon them all, but they had done as much as human beings could do: the wild North Sea had proved too much for their strength.

While the coxswain and crew were making their second launching six men of the crippled *Fernebo* decided to risk getting ashore in a small boat. Their plight was desperate, for they did not realise the turbulence created by the huge waves which crashed unceasingly upon the beach. They could see that the

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Louisa Heartwell was fighting a losing battle and decided that their only hope of survival was to take the desperate chance of reaching safety in their own small boat.

With bated breath the crowd watched the little craft leave the wreck and begin to move towards them. Such a suicidal attempt seemed sheer madness, but that tiny boat kept afloat as she crept slowly shoreward, aided by the force of water and the following wind. It was incredible! A miracle was happening before their eyes, for the boat had nearly reached the beach and had only a hundred, eighty, fifty yards to go to safety. Then, like a piece of driftwood, she was picked up and capsized and the six men were thrown into the seething water.

A cry of horror went up from the onlookers, but in an instant a dozen watchers on the water's edge, opposite the spot where the boat had overturned, linked hands and went into the surf. The leader, Private Stewart Holmes, was soon up to his waist, his armpits, his neck and was grabbing a struggling seaman. Another chain of men had formed to complete the rescue and between them they got the half-drowned man ashore. Even as they were doing this Holmes had reached and was pulling another man towards shallow water. A third, a fourth, a fifth and the last man was saved. Above the noise of the storm there arose cheer after cheer, for this was really something to shout about. A grim tragedy had been averted by the initiative and courage of ordinary folk who had acted without thought of their own safety. It was not known until later that the last seaman to be rescued had nearly drowned Private Holmes by his struggling and the soldier had to be hurried to hospital.

But the drama had not ended.

Through the spindrift and gloom of that wild day the rolling shapes of the two portions of the *Fernebo* could be seen as the storm drove them closer and closer to the shore. Then, about 5 p.m., they grounded, with the grinding roar of iron on stones. The after part struck the shore near the groyne, which runs four hundred feet into the sea below the 'Doctor's Steps'. The fore half was some hundred and fifty yards away against the next break-

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water, opposite Cromer lighthouse. Fortunately the remaining crew were all on the after part of the ship.

The Cromer Rocket Life-saving Company set up their line-throwing gun opposite the wreck, but although this was only a short way out, the wind was too strong and the lines were blown wide or short of the objective.

The Sheringham Company also arrived and tried their skill, but with no better result.

By 9 p.m. the two companies had to admit defeat. Twelve rockets had been fired and not one had been near enough to be secured.

Two very powerful Army searchlights had been brought up from a near-by anti-aircraft unit and positioned on the cliffs and their beams directed downward clearly showed the plight of the remaining members of the *Fernebo's* crew.

Here was drama indeed. The brilliant beams cut through the dark night and, illuminating the scene of the struggle, showed how near that broken hulk was to the shore and yet how far. The watching crowd could see only too clearly the terrifying turbulence of the sea filling that narrow gulf and making it almost impassable for men and boats.

The rockets having failed, the only hope of rescue now lay with Henry Blogg and his men. He had seen his exhausted crew rested a little from their six-hour battering and he realised that the sailors on the wreck would lose their lives unless he could do something quickly. He hurried to Commander Hall, who was in charge of operations.

The Commander was at first opposed to exposing the lifeboat and her crew to a further attempt under the prevailing conditions.

'It's impossible,' he said.

'No, it isn't, sir,' Blogg replied.

'But you won't get anybody to go out with you in this weather.'

'Oh, yes, I shall, sir.'

'Your men are worn out, Blogg.'

‘It’s not a question of my men, sir: it’s the others – those who are in danger out there.’

‘All right, Blogg, if you think so. And may God be with you.’

Blogg put it to his crew and although every man was feeling the strain, not one hung back or made excuses. Bruised and battered as they were by their previous attempt, they would try again to get those despairing figures off the wreck in the face of one of the fiercest gales Cromer had ever known. Compassion is a great driving force, but here it was being helped by confidence in a great and fearless leader. Wherever Henry Blogg led they would follow – even into the Devil’s Throat.

On board the after part of the *Fernebo* Captain Evald Palmgren and the men with him could not see much of Cromer’s lights, for the fear of Zeppelins had enforced a blackout, but they could see the dancing lights of many lanterns winking through the rain-swept darkness. Hope was almost dead, for again and again they had seen the flash of the rocket-gun and knew the wind was too strong for the projectile. The sea was now in its worst mood and showed no sign of abating. Everything seemed against them.

On shore, the news had gone round among the chilled watchers that their boat was going to try again and cheer after cheer of encouragement rang out across the water, bringing new hope to the wrecked men and voicing the challenge of the *Louisa Heartwell*’s crew flung in the teeth of that north-easter. The cheering could mean only one thing to the *Fernebo*’s men: a new attempt was to be made to save them.

Hope broke through the hardening crust of despair and they strengthened their grip on ropes and rails as the seas tried harder than ever to dislodge them.

So for the third time that day the boat was dragged on its carriage into the sea, this time in darkness, with the help only of swinging lamps, the light of which made the wet oilskins glisten and reflected back from the slanting, stinging sleet. For half an hour they struggled to get clear of the surf. Each time they tried they were swept back into the shallows, but each time they managed to keep the boat’s head to the seas and start pulling again to

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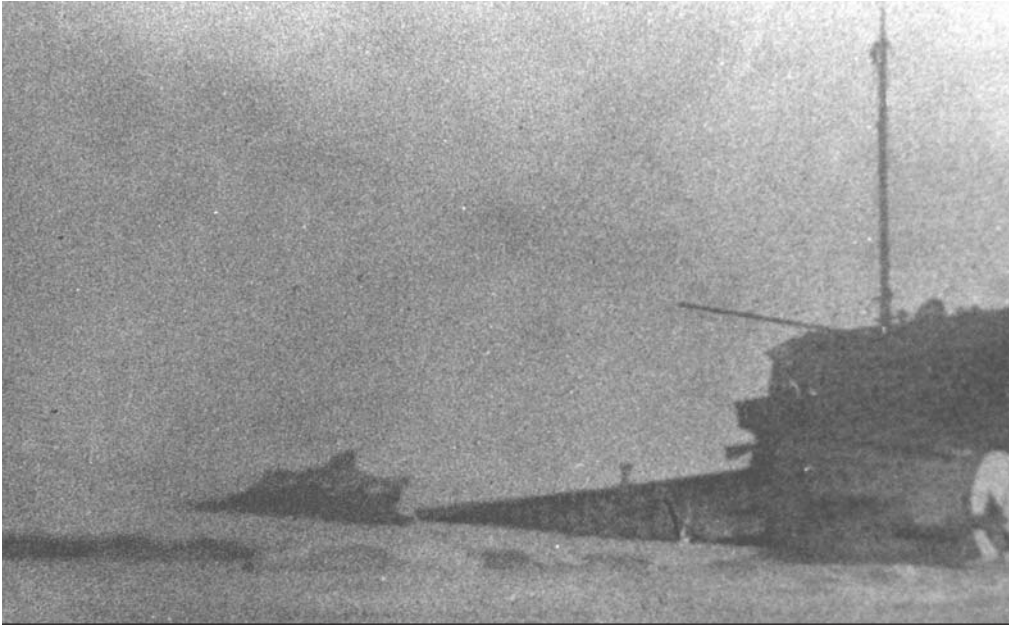
get into deeper water. When half-way between shore and wreck the searchlights held the *Louisa Heartwell* as, for a moment, she rode the crest of a huge wave and, the next, was completely lost to view in the trough of the waves.

Some witnesses say five thousand people were gathered on the shore to watch that fight. Not one who saw it would ever forget it and many a man not used to praying did so now for that little boat fighting those mountainous seas. Wet through and shivering, they watched spellbound. Had that crew of twenty men all been in their thirties and fresh to the task they could not have pulled harder. It was magnificent. Henry Blogg was getting more out of them than they knew they had in them.

Suddenly a tremendous sea hit the *Louisa Heartwell*, smashing five oars and washing three more overboard and the boat began drifting almost helpless towards a groyne. Then, and only then, did they have to give up and Henry Blogg let the boat come ashore. Another round had been won by the sea!

A period of comparative inaction followed, during which the spectators stamped their feet and beat their arms to restore circulation. Some dashed indoors for a quick cup of tea or to snatch some food, but they were soon back on the shore, for what was happening in Cromer that night was something they might never see again, something they would have to talk about when stories of sea rescue were being told in the years to come. A county that boasted the greatness of its seamen was watching a trial of strength between some of its ablest lifeboat-men and the North Sea in a roaring fury. Neither the slashing hail nor the onshore gale that tried to push people from their vantage points above this arena could make them leave. They must see this thing through.

Rockets were still being fired, as though in a forlorn hope of reaching the wreck, and it was planned to wait until the tide ran out a little, then move the apparatus farther down the beach towards the ship. But Henry Blogg had seen a chance. The tide had reached a point where an 'outset', or seaward flow from a breakwater, was sweeping almost out to the wreck. If he could get the lifeboat in that it would help them to reach the ship.



The stern of the Fernebo aground on the east beach at Cromer. Eighty-five years later her keel can still be seen at low water.

‘Tom Bussey,’ said the coxswain to his head launcher, who had been wet through since morning, ‘go and get them spare oars. We’re going to have another go.’

That was the Blogg spirit – an invincible determination that would not let him see that he was beaten. For sheer courage Henry Blogg had no peer.

The men had had a breather. The new oars were shipped and scores of launchers ran the boat into the water for the fourth launch that day. Then, with searchlights focused on their target, they pulled with all their skill and strength.

Watched with agonised anxiety from wreck and shore, the lifeboat slowly approached the wreck and time and again it looked as though the stout boat must be flung against the barnacled sides of the broken Fernebo. One moment the *Louisa Heartwell* could be seen, vividly clear against the ship and the next she had slid into the trough of the waves and disappeared from view. No one could remember how long it took to get the exhausted survivors into the boat, but it seemed an age, fraught

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with anxious suspense, before the lifeboat began to draw away from the wreck.

Then, to the spectators' unspeakable relief, the victory rocket 'Green burns white' went up from the lifeboat and the search-lights followed her as she came quickly to the shore, where willing hands helped the eleven rescued men and the rescuers to safety.

It was nearly 1 a.m. and Henry Blogg and his crew had battled on and off for fourteen hours, risking their lives to save total strangers – Greeks and Swedes – from the fury of the sea.

It was over! Blogg had won the last round and beaten the North Sea in its worst mood. Overcome with joy after long hours of suspense and anxiety, the crowd shouted and cheered in wild excitement.

One Cromer man, looking back over nearly forty years to that scene, recalled how he had stood as a lad of nine watching the drama and although soaked to the skin had stayed far into the night to see the excited crowd drag the lifeboat ashore with her rescued men, her crew and her wonderful coxswain. He too had yelled himself hoarse acclaiming the lifeboat-men and there and then had placed Henry Blogg alongside Horatio Nelson and Robert Falcon Scott as his boyhood heroes.

If Nelson and Scott had stood on the cliffs that night and seen that service they would surely have made room for this humble fisherman of Cromer and his magnificent team, who had written one of the most thrilling chapters in lifeboat history.

The *Fernebo's* crew were quickly got ashore and one man with severe scalds was rushed to Cromer hospital. Four others with minor injuries were also treated and then joined their companions at the Red Lion Hotel.

On the Thursday (January 11) of that week, when the gale had spent itself and the sea had sobered down, the body of Johan Anderson was washed ashore at Trimmingham.

An inquest was held and Captain Palmgren identified his officer and told of his accident and loss and how he had gone on the 10th to search the wrecked forepart of the *Fernebo* to make

THE FERNEBO

sure he was not there. They buried the young Swedish seaman in Mundesley churchyard, close to the cruel sea that had taken this young life and then, as if in remorse, had given him up to be buried in consecrated ground on an alien shore.

Commander Hall, in a letter to the editor of the *Lifeboat Journal*, said of Henry Blogg:

It was his own remarkable personality and really great qualities of leadership which magnetised tired and somewhat dispirited men into launching and when the boat was launched it was the consummate skill with which he managed her and the encouragement he gave his crew which brought their efforts to such a successful conclusion.

For this magnificent rescue Henry Blogg was awarded the Gold Medal of the RNLI for conspicuous gallantry. It was the VC of the service – the highest award. The medals were presented at the Annual Meeting of the Institution at the Mansion House on

The crew of the Louisa Heartwell wearing the medals awarded after the rescue of the Fernebo. Henry Blogg sits in the centre.



HENRY BLOGG OF CROMER

April 17, 1917, at which HRH the Duke of Connaught presided. Before the medals were presented the Swedish Minister, Count Wrangel, handed over a cheque for £250 for the crew of the *Louisa Heartwell* from the owners of the SS *Fernebo*.

The Duke of Connaught also announced that, owing to his exertions and exposure that day in helping with the launching, Private Sharpe, of the Army Service Corps, had developed paralysis and there was little hope of his recovery. The Institution had granted him £100 and the Swedish Vice-Consul £25.

The second coxswain was awarded the Silver Medal and twelve members of the crew also received the Bronze Medal in recognition of their service to the *Fernebo*.

The station that had not won an Institution medal in sixty years had won fourteen in a single day.