



## THE NORWEGIAN LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION

by

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The Life-Boat Institution in Norway, called "Norsk Selskap til Skibbrudnes Redning", was founded in 1891 and has a fleet of 28 seagoing ketches. Our life-boat system is entirely different from that prevailing in other countries, but is very well suited to the special conditions obtaining on the Norwegian Coast, and it has had very fine results. As is well-known, the coast of Norway is very rocky and dotted with multitudes of islands, shoals and pinnacles, so these ketches are not placed at stations from which they are launched when required, but they are kept cruising in areas where navigation is considerable—in the great arteries of shipping traffic—and where the great fisheries take place, in order to *prevent* disasters and loss of life. These small ketches, therefore, are out all winter, cruising in all kinds of weather, good or bad. They are excellent seagoing boats and have exceeded all expectations with respect to seaworthiness. Most of them were designed by Mr. Colin ARCHER, a Scotsman formerly residing at Larvik, Norway. Their dimensions are 46'9" × 15'10" with 7'6" draught. The "*Dream Ship*", which during 1919-1920 made a voyage from England through the Panama Canal to Tonga Tabu in the Pacific Ocean, was built in Norway, while the "*Shanghai*" which recently arrived at Copenhagen, was built in CHINA, both of them from the same drawings of COLIN ARCHER's life-saving ketches.

### *FOLLOWING THE FISHING FLEET.*

They are equipped with sails only, but are easily handled by a skilful master and crew. Our life-boats, therefore, regulate their movements according to those of the fishing fleet and at the same time keep a sharp lookout for ships in distress or in a critical situation. We try to prevent catastrophes, in other words instead of waiting for the shipwrecked mariner to be driven ashore, we effect a rescue of both boat and crew in the open sea, and in this arduous work we have very many times succeeded in saving boats as well as in rescuing mariners.

### *A KETCH OF GLORIOUS MEMORY.*

It is impossible to mention our first life-boat called *Colin Archer* without remembering the first deed of this little ketch of glorious memory. She was on her first cruise. The day after her arrival at Vardö in FINLAND a storm was brewing and the harbour office was warned that several fishing-smacks had dragged their anchors and were driving onto the rocks in Havningberg—a little fishing place situated twelve nautical miles from Vardö. Nobody had thought of "the seagoing life-boat"—this little pigmy—but after a few steamers had abandoned the attempt to stand by to give assistance (they were barely able to make headway), the "*Colin Archer*" was informed of the distress and immediately set off from Vardö with sails close-reefed. Arriving on the scene of the disaster she found the whole harbour entrance a line of breaking surf, but while trying to smooth the heavy sea with oil, she cruised between the drif-

ting smacks and went alongside them close enough for the fishermen to jump on board. She came, as one may imagine, into most dangerous proximity with the smacks, and it was only with the greatest difficulty and the most skilful seamanship that she succeeded in rescuing 21 men and one woman in the course of three quarters of an hour. All were landed at Vardo, and the "*Colin Archer*" immediately put off for Havningberg and saved another 14 men; 36 livres in all.

#### A WISE DECISION.

It was on the 19th of May 1894 that the wise decision was made to build seagoing life-saving ketches of this type. But it showed at the same time that the master, M. ANTHONSEN, was in his element; the right man in the right place, whose skill was universally acknowledged. A few years later this brave and skilful sailor was drowned outside his very door at the light-house off Vardö.

And many, many times it has fallen to the lot of our life-boat ketches to be of considerable use to our merchant fleet by putting a pilot aboard in an emergency.

#### AIDING MERCHANT SHIPS.

Many people will remember the Christmas week of 1915—every day being stormy with heavy frost and snow squalls. The ketch "*William Eger*" was at that time cruising off the Naze. At noon on the 23rd, a gale was blowing, and the ketch, barely making headway in a heavy sea and all covered with ice, happened to fall in with a big steamer trying to put into port for safety, as she was in a critical situation. Entirely ice-covered from stem to stern, the sea continually washing over her decks, with an error in her dead reckoning, the steamer was in a dangerous situation. But Skipper Larsen sailed his ketch alongside the steamer, jumped into the sea and was hauled on board the vessel which was brought safely into harbour. Next day, Christmas Eve, the same ketch fell in with the steamer "*Kiel*", also trying to put into port for refuge. This time there was great risk in getting close enough to be hauled on board, and therefore the steamer proceeded into harbour, navigating in the wake of the ketch. On Christmas Day, with heavy frost and a storm blowing, one of the crew from "*William Eger*" succeeded in boarding the steamer "*Bruse*" of Oslo, while next day the master of the same ketch boarded the steamer "*Loke*" of Stockholm on her passage from Sundsvall to Tunis and took her to a port for safety—the steamer having been in a very critical condition with her deck cargo working and the fore-rigging broken away. On the 27th and 28th of the same Christmas week, a pilot was put on board of steamers which were in danger and were forced to run for safety. But the crew of the ketch were seriously frost-bitten both on their faces and hands.

#### NINETEEN LIVES SAVED IN A DAY.

As to the help rendered to the fishing fleet I must mention the life-saving ketch "*Nordland*" in connection with the splendid work she did off the west point of Lofoten on the 2nd of April, 1919.

A fishing fleet of more than 200 boats had gone to sea in the morning to haul their tackle, the storm-warning not having reached the station until an hour after their departure. Immediately afterwards an off-shore storm with snow set in. The ketch was only able to carry close reefed sails, but very soon she came up with a boat with four men on board and later she found two boats with eight men, in a hopeless condition. They were brought safely to harbour, the fishermen having given up all hope as they were suffering horribly from frost and hunger and had to be brought on board the ketch by the joint efforts of the life-boat men. And after dinner the ketch rescued two other boats with seven men; no less than nineteen lives rescued in a day.

*THE "STAVANGERFJORD".*

On the evening of the 25th of January 1920 the ketch "*Christian Bors*" was requested by wireless to put a pilot on board the Norwegian American liner "*Stavangerfjord*", as no boat dared to go out in such a storm. The ketch immediately put out and at about three in the morning the "*Stavangerfjord*" was sighted standing against Feie light-house. The ketch sheered up alongside under the lee of the steamer and succeeded in setting a pilot on board. But the wind was blowing with hurricane force with a heavy drift and sea, and the big steamer was unfortunately driven against the ketch, breaking her rigging and rail-stanchions and smashing her side. As the ketch was in a sinking state the crew were forced to leave her. But she proved better than one would have imagined. Her watertight bulkheads kept her afloat, and she was carried ashore, a distance of 16 miles in 12 hours, was repaired and one month later in full work again. It will be agreed that these striking instances are sufficient proof of the practical use of the ketches and of their great importance to seagoing traffic and to fishing, which is our most important industry. Time and again during violent winter storms these small craft suddenly emerge through the snow squall with their red Malta Cross shining on the bows, with the whole crew thoroughly familiar with the most frequented seaways, and help is rendered and pilotage is provided to boats and ships in difficulty or distress. And it is obvious that this work is of far-reaching importance and is a great factor in the safety of navigation on our difficult coasts, a great and indispensable contribution to safety at sea generally.

*SUPPORTED BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS.*

Our Life-boat institution is supported by voluntary contributions (as in England). These contributions vary each year, and most of them are collected by women. "Each life saved from shipwreck is a home saved".

*2600 LIVES SAVED.*

At the close of 1923 nearly 2600 lives had been saved and about 77,000 persons had been helped to reach the shore, nearly all of them after having thrown up the sponge. Boats towed ashore number no less than 26,500 while vessels assisted, 520.

