

FEBRUARY 2013: ST CLAIR SLSC



SOUTHERN WINNER



RESCUE OF THE MONTH

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING RESCUES

In it for life

Date/time: 2 February 2013 at 4pm
Location: St Clair Cliffs
Lifeguards involved: Scott Fraser, Niam Chronican, Sam Riddell, Angus Mackenzie, Rhys McAlevey, Cam Burrow, James Rolfe, Carla Laughton, Tom Garforth. St Kilda SLSC – Stefan Brown, Sam Kinraid

It was 4pm on a Sunday afternoon when St Clair Lifeguard and Marine Search and Rescue (MSAR) member Scott Fraser received a mayday call about a fishing vessel in trouble.

The call was received from the Dunedin Marine SAR co-ordinator via Otago Maritime radio. The five metre alloy O'Bay, with three men on board, was taking part in a local fishing competition when both its motors failed. The O'Bay began to drift toward the cliffs between Tunnel Beach and St Clair around 1-1.5km southwest of the clubhouse.

One of the crew members was in the water at the time diving for Paua amongst submerged rocks. The two other crew members abandoned the O'Bay and managed to swim to the rocks and negotiate their way to the base of the cliff. The boat's owner managed to transmit the mayday just prior to leaving his vessel.

Lifeguards Scott Fraser and Niam Chronican began an immediate search of the St Clair cliff area in the patrol IRB (IRB1). A second IRB (IRB2) with crew of Sam Riddell and Angus MacKenzie was dispatched to stand off the cliffs and provide a link for communications in the form of a radio relay.

Initially IRB1 was unable to locate the boat or crew so they moved off shore to make contact with Otago Maritime Radio on the emergency channel to ascertain further information on location. Meanwhile the boat owner had been able to move

200m along the cliffs toward St Clair and make radio contact with IRB1 and direct them to his injured crewman who had a broken ankle as a result of being knocked around in the rocks and surf.

In IRB1 located the injured man and Scott swam out to him with fins and a rescue tube to better ascertain his condition. A third IRB (IRB3) arrived from St Clair, crewed by Cam Burrows and Rhys McAlevey. Rhys, also a Marine SAR member, swam to assist the boat owner.

At this stage it was unclear where the third crew member was so Niam decided to return to St Clair in IRB1 to pick up further lifeguards. IRB2 made its way in to the cliffs to search for the third crew member who it was assumed was still diving for paua south of where the O'Bay had now washed up onto rocks and was starting to break up.

A fourth IRB (IRB4) from St Kilda SLSC arrived with Senior Marine SAR member and lifeguard Stefan Brown and lifeguard Sam Kinraid. They maintained a safe position off shore ensuring the safety of all crews and patients while the operation was undertaken. Stefan provided a coordination role and point of communication between the Police, the responding Rescue Helicopter, Marine SAR Coordinator and the lifeguards both on the water and at St Clair SLSC.

The Rescue Helicopter was able to winch the injured crewman off the rocks and transport him to Dunedin Hospital.

Lifeguards were able to successfully negotiate the rocks and surf and get the boat owner to the waiting IRB's, where he was returned to St Clair Beach. The diver was located by IRB 3. St Clair beach itself was busy at the time with around 150 people in the flagged area. A large rip had kept the patrol busy all day.

All lifeguards demonstrated a high skill level from the initial assessment of the required response to the area of the reported Mayday, identifying the need for on-going radio communications and the risk involved operating under the cliffs.

The skills of the lifeguards involved in the rescue was outstanding from the rescue swimmers and IRB operators to all those that managed the situation both at the scene and back at St Clair Beach.

