

The 'Amelia Gregory Armstrong', 1985, named after her benefactress.



LOCAL CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Since 1st August 1967, Silloth has had a RNLI inshore rescue boat, housed in the old lifeboat house for £10 per annum, paid to the Council. Its present crew (1983), all part-time volunteers, trained on station, are:- Collin Akitt (Coxswain), Derek Wilson, Ashley Litt, David Scott, Dick Jordan, Stuart Graham, David Akitt, Robert Bell, Mick Satterthwaite, Philip Satterthwaite, Alan Wise. Since 1967 Silloth Lifeboat has been called out 86 times and has saved 50 lives.

The first Silloth Lifeboat was launched in June 1860, not long after the Port of Silloth had been established. Early the previous year the schooner 'Mary' of Port Carlisle, while carrying a cargo of slates had gone aground on the sandbanks off Silloth and had been nearly lost with all her crew. This near-tragedy had awakened public attention to the necessity of a lifeboat on some part of the Cumberland coast, and a subscription list to buy a boat was started.

Miss Burdett Coutts, a great Victorian philanthropist, came forward with an offer to buy the boat if local subscribers would supply the house for it and provide the sums needed for its annual maintenance.

By early summer 1860 the house was ready, a crew engaged and the boat arrived from London. The railway company ran special trains from Carlisle for the launching. The new lifeboat, mounted on its carriage, was waiting outside the Solway Hotel (the Golf Hotel), and then, drawn by six horses, it was taken to the launching site just off the Cote lighthouse. With its eightman crew aboard, all wearing their cork life-jackets, the boat was launched, a bottle of port being dashed against her side as she slid into the sea. She was named the 'Angela' after her donor.

The original lifeboat crew were John Duff (Coxswain), Robert Ferguson, William Hawkins, Thomas Howes, Joseph Bennett, Joseph Faulder, John Johnston and James Matthews. Their boat served the town until 1867; it was 30 feet long, 7 feet wide and 3 foot 3 inches deep and was rowed by 6 oars. It was a self-righting boat, designed by James Peake, an Admiralty naval architect, and built by Gorrest and Son of Limehouse, London. The first annual meeting and accounts of the Silloth Lifeboat Committee showed that the boat cost £148 9s. 6d., the Lifeboat House £146 18s., and the carriage and skids £59. It was estimated that the annual cost of maintaining the service would be between £25 - £30.

As the first boat eventually became unfit for service the station was sent a second which was rather bigger at 32 feet long, and rowed by 10 oars. She took over the name 'Angela' of her predecessor, until 1877 when she was renamed 'Mary Louisa', having been appropriated to the legacy of a Miss Browne. 'Mary Louisa' lasted until 1885 when the third and last lifeboat, again 10 oared, slightly longer at 34 feet, with a beam of seven feet 6 inches. She was the gift of Miss Annie F Howis, of Tulse Hill, and was named the 'Emma Frisby'. She lasted until

the close of the station in 1896.

For seventy years Silloth was without a proper lifeboat apart from an 18 foot open dingy, housed at the Fire Station, provided by the old Wigton Rural District Council (this must have been some time after 1934). Tragically in 1956 four Silloth firemen - Mr Ramsay, Mr Bell, Mr Graham and Mr Johnston, were lost when they launched the town's lifeboat on a very stormy night to look for a wildfowler reported in difficulty on the Solway Marshes.

All the present-day Lifeboats are provided by the RNLI but usually (as with the present one, 1984) because of personal bequests - money was left by 'Amelia Gregory' specifically to provide a Lifeboat at Silloth and requesting the boat be named after her. The national organisation provides all the funds necessary for maintaining the Lifeboat. The men pool all monies paid for training sessions and call-outs in a special account and use it to provide extras for the Lifeboat which are not forthcoming from the national fund.

There is still a local committee which raises funds for RNLI and money is raised by the sale of souvenirs at the Lifeboat House, but all this money is sent direct to headquarters.

1987

As the ... (early 1980s) ...

The ... (the ...)

The Fire Service

As far as present memories, and records found (early 1900's), there has been a Fire Brigade in Silloth.

The earliest memories are of a hand drawn, hand pumped Fire Cart, which was housed at the back of Eden Street. It was manned by local volunteers (the Auxiliary Fire Service) who held their Fire Drill every Thursday evening. Through the early part of the century there are records that Holme Cultram UDC retained the services of Workington Fire Brigade for a fee of £3 per annum (probably in case of large fires the local brigade could not handle). In those days the Fire Brigade was paid by the local Council for work done and the Council would claim that payment from the people served, usually through an insurance company.

The present Fire Station was built in 1939 and was extended and a practise area with a three storey tower was added in 1969.

From at least the late 1930's to the late 1950's the town's volunteer firemen were also the town's lifeboatmen. Today, though these services are not officially connected, some volunteers are in both services.

Fire Brigade 1984

Sub Officer Ken Winter	Fireman John Hockin
Leading Fireman Keith Wood	Fireman Dick Jordan
Leading Fireman Howie Forster	Fireman Derek Wilson
Leading Fireman Frankie Graham	Fireman Mick Satterthwaite
Fireman Willie Minnican	Fireman Donny Smith
Fireman John Minnican	Fireman Robert Edmundson
Fireman Colin Akitt	Fireman Peter Long
Fireman Ian Cannon	

The men are trained on station, meeting each Wednesday evening for fire practise, and they are also sent on courses run by Cumbria Fire Service.

Firemen are alerted by a very up to date personal bleeper system today, a long way from the original alarm bell rung at the Police Station, which gave way to rockets in the late 1920's, then the setting off of the War-time air-raid warning syren; the bleeper is less alarming for the firemen's families who once had to suffer an alarm bell which rang in their homes, rung at the same time as the syren. But todays children must miss out on the excitement of hearing the 'Fire Syren' and running to the Fire Station to see which Fireman would get to the station first and to see the Fire Engine rush out to the rescue.

Silloth Pre-School Playgroup and Mother and Toddler Group

Early in 1978 four local mothers, Jill Martin, Sue Jones, Jane Ross and Margaret Plain decided that with the imminent retirement of Miss Edwards of the only local kindergarten there was a need in Silloth for pre-school age education. After an open meeting the mothers of the under-5's in Silloth rallied together, found premises, raised funds for equipment and Silloth Pre-School Playgroup held its first session in the Scout Hut, Solway Street, in September 1978. Over the last 5 years the Playgroup has been attended by 30 - 60 children per week.

In September 1980 the Mother and Toddler (under 3) Group started, one afternoon per week, and there have been over 30 mothers on the register, though average attendance is approximately 20.

Playgroup and the Toddler Club moved to Christ Church Hall in September 1981 and there were hopes of even better premises in the old Infant School buildings where a new Community Centre was to be established. Plans for this are now held up, possibly indefinitely.

Playgroup is run by voluntary Playleaders and a committee elected by the mothers. Funds for expenses are raised through fees charged and fund raising events such as jumble sales.

Old Age Pensioners Association

The Pensioners of the town have a meeting place in the Playing Field, just recently renovated and redecorated to blend in well with the newly built Football changing rooms, with a generous donation from the Silloth Round Table.

The Association was established in 1959 when Mr Jimmy Blake purchased the hut in the Playing Field and made a gift of it to the founder members, Mrs Humphries, Jack Thurlow, Arthur Hodgson and Mrs Armstrong. The present secretary is Mrs Muriel Robinson and the Management Committee includes other non-pensioners.

Weekly events:-

Monday - Open dominoes evening
 Thursday - Open Whist evening
 Friday - Afternoon dominoes, pensioners only.

Members organise an annual Sale of Work to raise funds as there are no subscriptions to be paid and only a very small charge is made for Whist and Dominoes.

250 pensioners go on the Annual Outing in June and Silloth Community School provides the venue for the Annual Christmas Tea.