



GRACE DARLING AND THE FINE ART OF SAVING LIVES AT SEA

JAMES TAYLOR

The Arts Society Fylde

Lowther Pavilion Theatre

6 March 2024 at 2.00pm

For a maritime nation, the story of Grace Darling (1815-1842) and the daring rescue of survivors from the shipwrecked *Forfarshire* in 1838 has a strong resonance, even now. The daughter of the lighthouse keeper on one of the Farne Islands off the Northumberland coast, she became a national figure for her part in saving nine survivors from the wrecked paddle steamer. As we celebrate in 2024 the 200th anniversary of the formation of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, it's an appropriate time to reflect on the heroism and selflessness that characterises the lifeboat service and its crews. Locally, of course, we remember the thirteen men of the St Annes lifeboat, lost in 1886 while attempting a rescue from the stricken *Mexico*, off Southport. The 12 men on the *Mexico* were saved by the Lytham lifeboat but the Southport boat also lost 14 of a crew of 16 in the same incident, representing in total the worst loss of life in the RNLI's history.

The last time that today's speaker visited The Arts Society Fylde it was in July 2017 to introduce us to the art of the picture postcard. This time Dr Taylor will help us to discover more about Grace Darling's bravery and her tragically short life, along with the artistic contribution that helped to keep her in the public eye. She became the 'poster girl' of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and was the first woman awarded their medal for gallantry.

JAMES TAYLOR

Dr Taylor studied at the Universities of St Andrews and Manchester, and is a former curator of paintings, drawings and prints, and co-ordinator of various exhibitions and galleries, at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. His publications include illustrated histories of *Marine Painting* (1995) and yachting art - *Yachts on Canvas* (1998), *The Voyage of the Beagle: Darwin's extraordinary adventure aboard FitzRoy's famous survey ship* (2008), *Careless Talk Costs Lives: Fougasse and the Art of Public Information* (2010) and *Your Country Needs You: the Secret History of the Propaganda Poster* (2013), *Dazzle: Disguise and Disruption in War and Art* (2016) and *Picturing the Pacific: Sir Joseph Banks and the Shipboard Artists of Cook and Flinders* (2018). James completed his PhD at the University of Sussex in 2015 on the voyager artist William Westall (1781-1850) who sailed with Commander Matthew Flinders aboard *HMS Investigator* (1801-1803) the first ship to circumnavigate Australia.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Dr Taylor proposes:

Jessica Mitford, *Grace Had an English Heart* (1988) - "a lively, light hearted read, full of passion for Grace Darling; it debunks many of the myths" - (an interesting suggestion after last month's lecture about her sister!)

Hugh Cunningham, *Grace Darling: Victorian Heroine* (2007) - "especially strong on the influences of Grace Darling in relation to literature".

Image: Grace Darling, Henry Perlee Parker (1785–1873), watercolour and pencil, 1838
National Portrait Gallery, London, by permission