

The William Henry & Mary King - Technical details

Length: 37ft

Beam: 11ft 6in

Displacement: 12 tons 1cwt (fully laden with crew and gear)

Water-tight compartments: 11

Air cases: 219

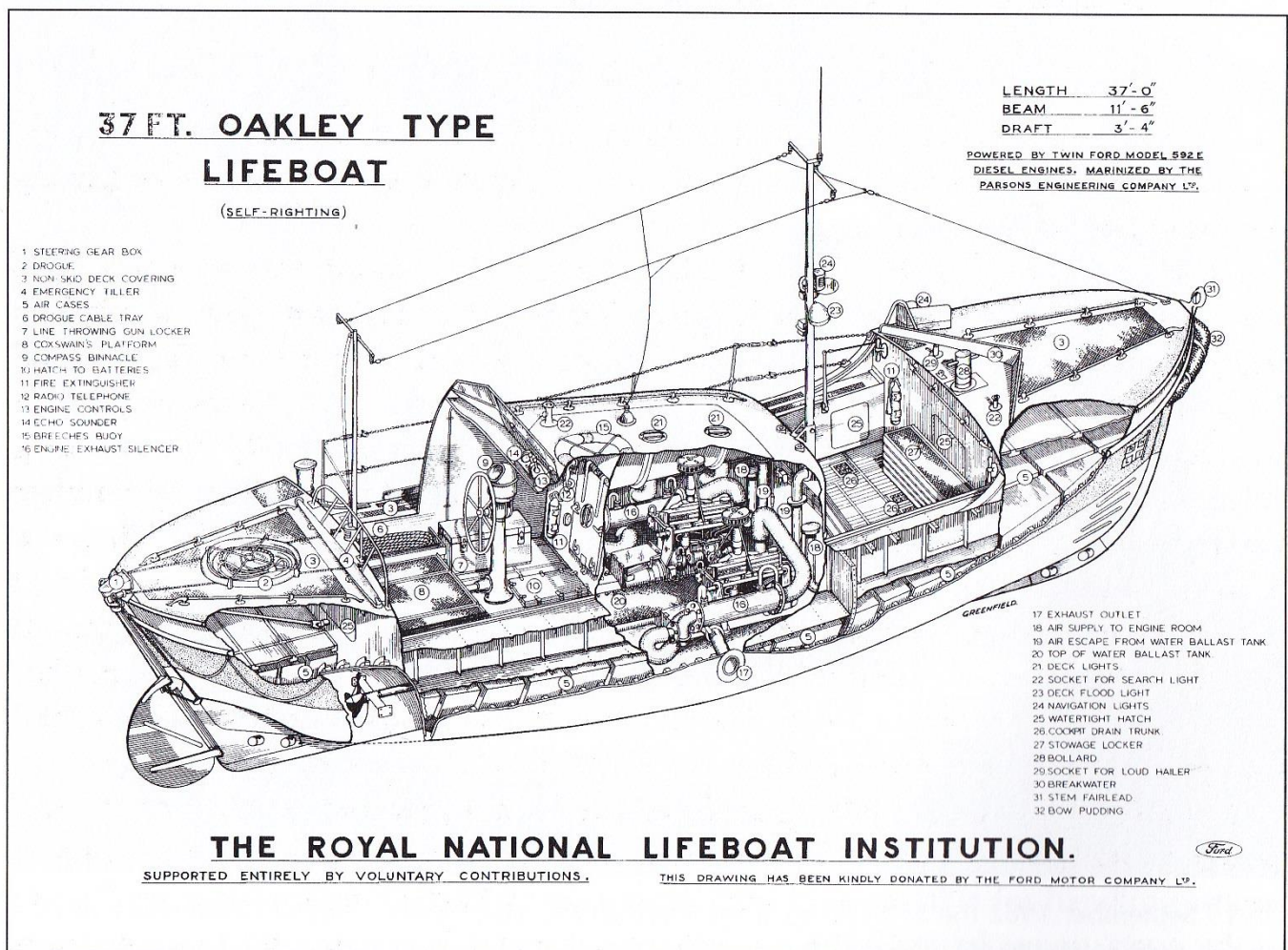
Hull: built with two layers of African mahogany, laid diagonally, and separated by a layer of calico, impregnated with white lead paint, to improve watertightness. The outer skin planks were 3/8in. thick, sloping forwards at 45 degrees, the inner skin 1/4in., sloping aftward at 45 degrees - with oak ribs inside for reinforcement. Many of the Oakleys were rebuilt during the 1980s, however, to keep them in service, with their hull construction changed to three skins of timber, cold moulded, and glued together with epoxy resin. The timber used was either mahogany or agba – a Nigerian cedar – with each skin 1/4in. thick and the planks in each layer laid at 90 degrees to the layer underneath

Main deck: double skin mahogany (5/16in. upper, 1/4in. lower)

Engines: twin four cylinder Porbeagle diesel motors, Ford 592E models adapted for marine use by the Parsons Engineering Co Ltd, and developing 52bhp at 2000rpm

Speed: 8.16 knots max, 7.0 knots cruising

Radius: 86.5 nautical miles at full speed, 149.5 nautical miles at cruising speed



Cutaway drawing of the 37ft Oakley that appeared in RNLI publications.

The *William Henry & Mary King* was normally manned by a crew of seven - a first and second coxswain, a first and second mechanic and three boatmen – and was considered able to carry 65 people in addition to the crew in fine weather or 35 when rough. Until a canopy was fitted to provide shelter for the helmsman in 1982, the only protection her crew had from the elements – spray, waves, winds, rain, sub-zero temperatures – were bright orange protection suits and neoprene-proofed nylon life-jackets.

In 1985, while serving in Bridlington, the *William Henry & Mary King*'s equipment was listed to include:

- Decca 060 radar scanner, with ranges of ½, 1½, 3, 6, 12 and 24 miles;
- Two multi-channel radio telephones: a Pye Westminster VHF set for communication with the Coastguard; and an Ajax medium frequency set for monitoring the international distress frequency (2182 kHz) for emergency calls;
- Signalling lamp and flares, loud hailer, searchlight, parachute flares;
- Sea anchor – a conical canvas bag, on a strong rope, the wider end of the bag stretched round a hoop: used, for example, to prevent the lifeboat drifting away from a vessel in distress or to keep her bow pointing into a strong wind;
- Schermuly rocket line throwing apparatus – capable of throwing a light line over 200 yards, to allow a stronger rope to be passed to a vessel in distress, for towing or transferring crew members or survivors;
- Breeches buoy – a traditional life-buoy, used for rescuing survivors when conditions made it impossible for a lifeboat to go alongside the vessel in trouble;
- Storm oil – sprayed on the sea to prevent waves breaking for a short time (fish oil was used, so as not to cause pollution);
- Provisions for comfort of survivors or emergency use by the crew, such as corned beef, biscuits, chocolate, soup, cigarettes, fresh water and a small supply of spirits;
- First aid kit, mouth-to-mouth resuscitator, stretcher, blankets, and first aid manuals.

Like many of the Oakley class, the *William Henry & Mary King* was launched on a carriage from the beach rather than down a slipway, using a semi-submersible tractor. As launch and recovery had to be achievable in all extremes of sea or weather, the Talus-MB-C tractor, based on a commercial Case 1150B model, was purpose-designed to work on the sand and up to 9ft deep in salt water, with caterpillar tracks, cab, a watertight engine enclosure, a powerful winch and floodlights.

