



## NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

### *Lifeboatman Extraordinaire*

Many people may be familiar with the name James Cable as that of the last lifeboat to sit on the beach before the building of the new lifeboat house. The *James Cable* was named after one of Aldeburgh's finest seamen who, in 1917, retired from active service after fifty years as a lifeboatman. The Suffolk Association had placed the first lifeboat at Sizewell in 1826, but it was in 1851 that the RNLI established a Lifeboat Station in Aldeburgh. This was also the year in which James Cable was born. He was only four years old when his father, a coastguard, was drowned after swimming out from Orford Ness to take a line to a ship in distress. At the age of 13 James Cable signed on as a cabin boy on a fishing smack and worked as a fisherman until he was 20. He then embarked on a small barque and sailed to the Far East. His travels took him on to Australia where he deserted the sea for a while and worked his way around the country. On his return to Aldeburgh James worked as a fisherman, but took time out to crew on yachts. Later he began to cater for the needs of holiday-makers eventually owning three fishing boats and four bathing machines. As a businessman and fisherman James Cable became a well-known personality on the beach and around town, but he is chiefly remembered for his years of service to the Aldeburgh lifeboat, thirty of them as coxswain. He was involved in a great number of heroic rescues and was awarded three RNLI Silver Medals for extraordinary bravery and many other awards for gallantry. There is only room here to recall one of his rescues.



In the early morning of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1893 the lifeboat "*Aldeburgh*" went out in the teeth of a Force 9 gale with Coxswain James Cable at the helm. After rescuing fourteen men from a Russian barque just before it broke up, James decided to head for Harwich as the seas were too heavy to return to the beach at Aldeburgh. En route they came upon another distressed vessel with seven men aboard. James brought the *Aldeburgh* in close so that two of his men could take a perilous jump to board the cutter and pilot her into Harwich. Later the same day the *Aldeburgh* was called out again, but sadly there was only wreckage to be found. Eventually the weather allowed the *Aldeburgh* and her exhausted crew to return home after being out for more than thirty hours.

Find out more about James Cable in the leaflet available from the museum which also has many exhibits related to this fine seaman and the Aldeburgh Lifeboats. From Easter Saturday until the end of April the museum will be open from 2.30 to 5.00 at weekends and on Easter Monday. From May to October the museum will be open daily. Museum staff can be contacted by email at [enquiries@aldeburghmuseum.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@aldeburghmuseum.org.uk). The web site is [www.aldeburghmuseum.org.uk](http://www.aldeburghmuseum.org.uk).