



MOUNTBATTEN MEDAL 2006

AARON DINHAM

At about 7pm on Sunday 29 October 2006, Aaron Dinham a lifeguard at the Saltash Leisure Centre was walking on the water front behind the Saltash Sailing Club, with his wife, when he heard screams for help coming from the water in front of the nearby Waterside pub. He could tell from the screams that it wasn't just somebody fooling about but clearly somebody in distress. He went to the water edge and could see that some distance from the shore a woman was drifting fast into a very strong tide towards the sea. Although she was trying to swim and was fully clothed she was clearly in difficulty.

Aaron immediately told his wife, Lucy to go to the pub and call 999. He then stripped to his boxer shorts, ran up the beach so he could use the fast moving tide to get to the woman more quickly. He entered the water that he described as "so cold" and noted that the tide was flowing particularly fast because of a lot of fresh water running into the river from previous days rain. The tide in the River Tamar was ebbing at the time. Aaron swam out past three lines of boats and when he got to the woman he gained the impression that she had jumped from a nearby bridge. As he approached her he asked her to calm down and told her not to grab him in order that he could rescue her. She replied that she was OK so he asked her to turn round and began towing her back to the beach by a chin tow. Halfway back to the shore she began to shout that she was being sick so he pulled her close to him and turned her over in order that she could be sick whilst still keeping her face out of the water. He then continued to tow her towards the shore for what he describes as "like forever" but he eventually got her onto the beach. At this time, some men from the pub had come down to the beach and helped him lift the lady away from the water. He then sent one of the men to the pub to get a blanket to put round her.

After about 5-10 minutes of Aaron talking to the lady, and whilst he was waiting for the ambulance, he describes her as "freaking out at the thought of going to hospital" and she ran off. He tried to stop her but she stated that she really didn't want to go to hospital and he let her go. Aaron waited the arrival of the Paramedics and told them the full story.

Five days later, still not knowing who the woman was, a thank you card was left at the Leisure Centre from the lady thanking Aaron for his actions and stating that he clearly saved her life on that Sunday evening. The lady on the Reception of the Leisure Centre said the lady who left the card was crying but would not leave her name. It would appear he discovered who she was from an article that appeared in the Saltash Journal on 2nd November 2006.

Aaron states that he had no doubt in his own mind that the woman would not have survived much longer in the very cold water that Sunday evening, particularly in view of the strength of the ebbing tide.

For his courageous actions in very cold and turbulent water of the River Tamar, Aaron Dinham is awarded the 2006 Mountbatten Medal.