

One of our researchers, Marta Smith, has found the following details of a Wakefield Lifeboat while browsing in the Reference Library.

Information gleaned from John Goodchild's article in 'Worthies of Wakefield' tells us that Thomas Clayton was a successful business man, a 'tallow chandler' who left half his estate to the Clayton Hospital, and the other half to establish the 'Clayton Trust'

The first entry was on 8 th May 1853

**MUNIFICENCE OF A WAKEFIELD CITIZEN.**—Thos. Clayton, Esq., of Wakefield, has presented to the National Lifeboat Institution, £250, to pay for a new lifeboat, to be called 'The Wakefield,' which town is his native place. The boat is to be stationed at Lytham, in lieu of the lifeboat at present there, which is not large enough for that dangerous locality, where shipwrecks are of frequent occurrence.

This was followed by an entry on 10th July 1853

Wakefield Historical Society

**LYTHAM NEW LIFEBOAT.—THE GIFT OF MR THOMAS CLAYTON, OF WAKEFIELD.**—A beautiful new lifeboat, mounted on her transporting carriage, has just been forwarded to Lytham, on the Lancashire coast, by the National Lifeboat Institution. This lifeboat is to replace a smaller one which was deemed unsuitable for the locality. The boat is 33 feet long, 8 feet wide, and rows ten oars. Her self-righting qualities were fully and satisfactorily tested on Monday last, in the Regent's Canal Dock, Limehouse. ~~The water she shipped was self-ejected,~~ through patent valves, in twenty seconds. The following are some of the remarkable qualities of the boat. 1. Great lateral stability. 2. Speed against a heavy sea. 3. Facility for launching and taking the shore. 4. Immediate self-discharge of any water breaking into her. 5. The important advantage of self-righting, if upset. 6. Strength. 7. Stowage room for a number of passengers. The boat was built by the Messrs. Forrestt, of Limehouse. The transporting carriage of the boat, which was built by Mr. J. Robinson, of Camden Town, London, was also tried on the occasion, and was found to answer admirably. By an ingenious contrivance, the boat with her crew on board, is launched off the carriage. With their oars in their hands, they are thus enabled to obtain headway before the breakers have to beat the boat broadside on the beach. The hauling-up of the lifeboat on her carriage is accomplished with equal facility. The cost (£250) of the lifeboat and carriage was presented to the Institution by Thomas Clayton, Esq., of Wakefield. A free conveyance was readily given to the old and new lifeboats by the London and North-Western Railway Company over their line.

Quickly followed by details of a successful rescue on 15 Sept 1853

WRECK OF A LIVERPOOL SHIP.—IMPORTANT SERVICES OF THE "WAKEFIELD" LIFEBOAT.—SOUTHPORT, Sept. 21.—Yesterday the wind blew strong from the west, and there was a very heavy sea on. Intelligence was brought to this place of a ship being aground on the Salthouse Sand Bank, near the river Ribble. The lifeboat of the National Lifeboat Institution was launched forthwith, and arrived at the vessel at 9.30 a.m. She was found to be the barque St Lawrence, of Liverpool, bound for Cardiff, in ballast. The lifeboat took off the captain's wife and child and twelve of the crew, and proceeded with them to Lytham, where they safely landed them. The captain and chief officer and two of the crew refused to leave the vessel, and the Lytham lifeboat, which also belongs to the National Lifeboat Institution, was sent to take them off the wreck if possible, as the vessel was striking heavily when the Southport Lifeboat left her. The Lytham lifeboat, which has only just been sent to her station, was presented to the Institution by Thomas Clayton, Esq, of Wakefield, and she is named "The Wakefield." It appears that the "Wakefield" lifeboat after a hard pull succeeded in reaching the stranded vessel, but the captain and those with him still remaining firm in their determination not to quit the ship, the lifeboat returned to the shore. On the following morning, however, a signal of distress was seen flying from the ship, and the "Wakefield" lifeboat was again sent out, when it was found that the vessel was a derelict, the remaining four men having left her in their own boat. It was still blowing a gale of wind, and as the vessel had eight feet of water in her hold, she was, of course, nearly unmanageable, but the crew of the lifeboat determined to make an effort to save the ship, and they have since been fortunately successful in bringing her safely into port. The bark would unquestionably have been totally lost had she remained on the bank another night. Both lifeboats are reported to have behaved admirably on these occasions. The cost of the Southport lifeboat was presented to the National Lifeboat Institution two or three years ago by James Knowles, Esq, of Eagley Bank. She has since been instrumental in rescuing three shipwrecked crews, consisting of twenty-one persons, and has also put off several times to the assistance of vessels in distress.