

ANDREW FREEMANTLE

Pro-Chancellor,

Andrew Freemantle is the Chief Executive of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. In his earlier career he was a Brigadier in the Army, and after retiring became Chief Executive of the Scottish Ambulance Service. At the RNLI he has inspired and led major developments including the founding of the world's first Lifeboat College at Poole.

Much of Andrew Freemantle's boyhood was spent in Bournemouth, though he was educated at Framlingham College in Suffolk. After some years in the British Army he joined the Australian Army and served with its SAS in Vietnam, one of very few British soldiers to do so. Returning to the British Army he rose to command the 1st Battalion of the Royal Hampshire Regiment from 1985–87, and was mentioned in despatches. He was promoted Brigadier to command 19 Infantry Brigade in 1987; then in 1989 he attended the Royal College of Defence Studies Course, where his fellow students included the former President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf.

Andrew Freemantle's main military ambition, he says, was to avoid working in the Ministry of Defence, so when he was posted there he quickly took early retirement. The Army marked the high esteem in which he was and is held by appointing him a Member of the Royal College of Defence Studies. He also became Chairman of the Hampshire Regimental Trustees, a position which he still holds and greatly values.

On leaving the Army he was appointed General Manager, and later Chief Executive, of the Scottish Ambulance Service. Here he managed 3,000 staff in 158 locations. During his time with the NHS he also took a postgraduate qualification at the University of Sheffield.

Andrew Freemantle joined the RNLI as its Director in 1998 (changing his title to Chief Executive in 2001). He refers to his period of tenure as 'a blink of an eye in the Institution's history', but his time as Chief Executive has been widely recognised as a formative period of great and lasting importance for the RNLI. His first step was a review of the organisation's Vision and Values, which he started characteristically by writing personally to 30,000 staff and supporters asking for their views, and for key words which might feature in the new Vision Statement. That Vision Statement proved to be highly influential, and most of the RNLI's developments in the last decade derive from it.

One of the most noteworthy of these developments led by Andrew Freemantle was the world's first Lifeboat College at Poole, opened by The Queen in 2004. It offers 36 courses including boat-handling, search and rescue and engineering. The College has advanced and spectacular training facilities, with a survival centre in which crews do a combined first aid, sea survival and firefighting course . . . all in darkness, with thunder and lightning, and a simulated helicopter rescue.

In another of Andrew's innovations, the RNLI now has more than 100 lifeguard teams which rescued nearly 10,000 people last year. In this and all the developments which he has led, Andrew encourages his staff – 550 at Poole alone – to share his own enduring sense of privilege in working for the Institution. He insists upon the highest standards, and takes great satisfaction in the RNLI's refusal to compromise in the design of lifeboats. The fact that 20-year-old lifeboats are still an attractive purchase to other countries such as China speaks volumes about their quality. The Institution sets the 'gold standard' for marine rescue services worldwide; so, for example, the China Rescue and Salvage Bureau, which could have taken any rescue service in the world as its model, chose the RNLI. The Chinese lifeboat college, now being built on Hainan Island off the south coast of China, is modelled on the Lifeboat College at Poole; indeed the Chinese planning authorities required the RNLI's approval before confirming permission to build.

The RNLI depends heavily on charitable giving, and its Chief Executive leads from the front in fund-raising. Last year he made a characteristic personal contribution when he cycled from Poole to Rome, raising nearly £60,000 for a memorial in Poole to commemorate the 750 lifeboat crew-members who have died saving lives at sea.

Andrew Freemantle has deservedly been honoured for his achievements and leadership. He became a Freeman of the City of London in 2001. He had already been appointed MBE in 1982 for operational service in the Army, and in 2007 he was advanced to CBE for services to maritime safety. In 2003 he became a Companion of the Chartered Management Institute. Earlier this year he was shortlisted for a Charity Times Award as Charity Principal of the Year.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Andrew Freemantle, and ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Business Administration, *honoris causa*.