

LONDON EVENTS, FEB 2016:

NEW ZEALAND PARTICIPATES IN RLSS 125TH ANNIVERSARY LONDON EVENTS

Marie Baker President and Judy Jessop Secretary from New Zealand were in London, UK recently for a week of events marking the 125th Anniversary of the Commonwealth-wide Royal Life Saving Society.

Royal Life Saving Society was formed in England in 1891 and the week saw delegates from many of the Society's 27 Commonwealth Member Branches make the trip to London to celebrate alongside friends, colleagues, and RLSS Commonwealth President, HRH Prince Michael of Kent.

They were joined by partners and friends from organisations working with the Society, along with officers from High Commissions in London for a packed programme of conference sessions, meetings, receptions, tours and dinners.

The two-day 125th Anniversary conference heard presentations on subjects as varied as how RLSS New Zealand revitalised itself after the devastating earthquake in 2011 which destroyed the branch's headquarters in Christchurch; how RLSS UK managed to get drowning prevention on the political agenda; what happens to your body when it enters cold water; aligning drowning prevention with the UN's sustainable development goals; and the history of beach lifeguarding in Gibraltar; along with several other interesting presentations.

His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent GCVO chaired a Commonwealth Council meeting and attended an evening reception hosted by RLSS UK Patron, Lord Norrie. The Society was also treated to a reception hosted by His Excellency Sir Lockwood Smith, New Zealand High Commissioner, at New Zealand House.

The last full day of events included a tour on a historic London Routemaster bus, taking in key landmarks in the society's history, including the home of founder William Henry in Bayley Street – which was also the Society's first headquarters – and ending at Highgate Ponds on Hampstead Heath where many of the lifeguarding techniques used today were first developed.

Celebrations continued with an Anniversary Dinner held at Greenwich.

Commenting on the week, RLSS Deputy Commonwealth President Clive Holland said:

“The week was a fantastic opportunity for members from around the Commonwealth to get together and meet each other perhaps for the first time, and learn from each other about how drowning prevention operates on a global scale.

“It also gave us all the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Society and, importantly, plan the future of the organisation in an ever-changing world. Many extremely

useful meetings were held and, of course, everyone enjoyed immensely the social events organised by our hard-working Commonwealth HQ team.

“I would like to thank our President, HRH Prince Michael of Kent, for his interest and invaluable contributions in the week’s events; to Lord Norrie for hosting the reception at the Cavalry and Guards Club and to His Excellency Sir Lockwood Smith for hosting the reception at New Zealand House.

“This is the first major event of our Anniversary year and I look forward to other activities taking place around the Commonwealth as the year progresses.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Royal Life Saving Society New Zealand is a Member Branch of the Royal Life Saving Society.

About the Royal Life Saving Society

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS), which is celebrating its 125th Anniversary in 2016, was established in England in 1891. It is a volunteer organisation and charity dedicated to the prevention of drowning, and has independent, self-governing branches active in 27 Commonwealth countries.

The RLSS works with affiliates, partners and volunteers to reduce drowning through public education and awareness, lifesaving and lifeguard training, survival swimming and swimming instruction, risk management, lifesaving sport, research into the causes and prevention of drowning, and advocacy for sound drowning prevention standards.

HM Queen Elizabeth II is the Society’s Patron, and HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCMG is the Commonwealth President. It is governed by the Commonwealth Management Committee, which comprises elected Branch Presidents representing Asia Pacific, Americas/Caribbean and Africa/Europe.

The Society is affiliated to the International Lifesaving Federation (ILS), which is recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the world authority on the global effort to prevent drowning.

About Drowning Prevention

The World Health Organisation’s 2014 [Global Report on Drowning](#) notes that drowning is among the ten leading causes of death on children and young people, with the under 5’s at disproportionately higher risk. Around 373,000 people down worldwide every year, with 90% of deaths occurring in low and middle-income countries, many of them in the Commonwealth.

Visit www.lifesaver.org.nz for more information.