

# News story: Life-saving officer honoured for heroic actions

A quick-thinking mariner who jumped into freezing waters to save a stranger's life has been given the top maritime honour for his bravery.

Stephen Chamberlain is one of [19 people who are receiving the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service](#) for going above and beyond in their service to the maritime industry.

Mr Stephen Chamberlain awarded the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service for an act of bravery in saving a life.

The Wightlink deck officer risked his own life in February (2018) to help a man struggling in the cold water in Portsmouth Harbour at 11pm. The crew on the St Clare ferry spotted the man in danger and Mr Chamberlain saw he was not able to reach the flotation device. The officer jumped in and kept the man, who was suffering from hypothermia, from drowning.

Another winner is Captain Belinda Bennett – the first black female captain in the commercial cruise industry, whose maiden voyage was a cruise to the Caribbean aboard a 148-passenger Windstar ship.

Maritime Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

Our merchant navy is crucial to keeping the UK thriving – helping deliver goods, energy and food to our homes.

These 19 people are a credit not just to the maritime industry but to the wider nation. They have gone above and beyond their duty for the benefit of others.

Stephen's heroic act and Belinda's trailblazing are just two examples of the outstanding service provided by our mariners.

Captain Belinda Bennett awarded the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service for services to the promotion of the maritime sector.

This is the third year the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service will be awarded to those who have set an outstanding example to others.

Among the other winners this year are Captain Timothy Charlesworth who, on top of his service, provides sailing opportunities for people with mental health and addiction problems, Captain Michael Reeves who has 5 decades of merchant navy experience – much of which has been spent promoting seafaring to young people – and Captain Antonio Gatti who has played a crucial role in scientific research on board a Royal Research Ship during his 33 years of service.

The medals will be awarded by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, at a ceremony in Trinity House on Wednesday, 26 September 2018.

Nominations have been put forward for those working in the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets of the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

This state award replaces the shipping industry's previous Merchant Navy Medal which was awarded annually from 2005 to 2015 by the Merchant Navy Medal Fund.