

To start at the beginning: In the mid nineteenth century travel overland in Norway was beset with difficulty and most towns and villages were coastal. In consequence when members of the population were obliged to travel, they did so primarily by water and due to the severe winter conditions encountered such journeys were often hazardous.

Lifeboat stations began to appear on the southern parts of the Norwegian coast in 1854. These were managed on a voluntary basis by station committees, but their activities grossly uncoordinated, and far too few for efficient sea rescue cover. It does not appear that any efforts were made to record the activity of these existing boats used for rescue, or if records were kept they can be no longer traced.

After years of effort to establish a Norwegian Lifeboat Service, Dr Oscar Tybring, with the assistance of the Norwegian Merchants Society of Christiania finally achieved his ambition when Norsk Selskab til Skibbrudnes Redning (N.S.S.R.) was founded on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1891.

Under the new organization lifeboat cover was extended and expanded, and it was clear that shore stations alone were inadequate for sea rescue requirements. A decision was made that lifeboats suitable for sea voyages to escort the fishing fleets as safety vessels were an essential requirement.

A naval architect named Colin Archer who built the famous vessel **FRAM** in 1892, and had also built a lifeboat/mission vessel for the Salvation Army in Norway, was commissioned to design a suitable vessel for extended rescue patrol

# LIFEBOATS and STAMPS of NORWAY

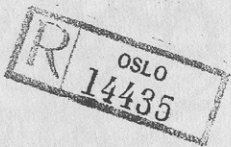
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Illustrations of the two stamp issue to commemorate the Centenary of the NSSR.



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duties. His first design for the NSSR was a 42' ketch rigged sailing vessel, handled by a crew of four, which became operational in 1893 and which was named **COLIN ARCHER**.

In 1941, to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NSSR a set of four postage stamps were issued (SG296-299). 10 + 10 and 15 + 10 values of identical design showing head of Colin Archer and the lifeboat **COLIN ARCHER**. The two higher values 20+10 and 30+10 of identical design showed the lifeboat **OSLOSKOYTA** this being the 50<sup>th</sup> vessel to enter the fleet since the initial Colin Archer design.

As technical details of both these lifeboats have previously been given in the SSS Encyclopaedia, I will refrain from repetition.

The cover illustrated has been downsized to fit these pages, but as will be seen it contains the four stamp issue for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NSSR. It will be noted that in 1941 Norway was under German occupation, It would appear however that there was at least one eye open to take advantage of this philatelic occasion but I believe examples of such covers are rare.

Moving on to 1991, the International Lifeboat Conference took place in Oslo, this coinciding with the Centenary of the NSSR. For this occasion the Norwegian Post Office issued two stamps only. The 3.20k which featured the lifeboat **SKOMVAER III** and the 27k the now historic **COLIN ARCHER**. As technical information is given in the SSS Encyclopaedia, once again I refrain from reiteration of such information.

The happy ending is that since 1974



she has been owned by the Norwegian Maritime Museum, and is frequently loaned to the NSSR for fund raising activities. Also she is a regular entry in the Tall Ships Race and in her Centenary Year achieved first place in her class. I was fortunate to go aboard her in 1999 when she sailed into Poole, Dorset, to be among the many ex-lifeboats in a 'sail past' on the occasion of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the RNLi where the above photograph was taken.

The **COLIN ARCHER** was sold out of service in 1933 to Hans Borge of Tonsberg, Norway. He in turn sold her to Charles & Anna Crownshield of North Carolina in 1938 who sailed her to the US in 54 days. Some time later as the result of a cooking stove explosion she was severely damaged by fire and lay derelict for a long period. In 1961 the neglected vessel was noticed by an enthusiast who purchased her for \$1000 and shipped her back to Norway. Restored to a seaworthy condition she was refloated in 1963.