

Accession number: 25/56

Biographical Background: From Hull but now living in Beverley, David Marshall was born in 1940. His father was the managing director of an industrial paint factory. David's mother was the daughter of a local confectioner and baker. Aged 11, David passed his exams to attend the Grammar School in Hull. Despite a place in the Grammar School being available, David joined a private Navy School, RMNS Bearwood in Berkshire. Upon leaving private Navy School, he prepared for a career in the Royal Navy from the age of 18, but felt his future lay in Marine Electronics. He returned to Hull to attend Hull's Technical Training College, which was well-known for its Marine Electronics Department, studying for a 2nd Class PMG radio Operator's Certificate of Competence. This allowed for sailing as a qualified radio operator. He stayed on at Hull's technical College to take a first-class PMG and additional Radar Maintenance Certificate, with extra night class to study in Electronics Engineering to emerge as Radio Electronics Officer First Class.

He served as Electronics Communication Officer first-class aboard the Cunard transatlantic liner, Carinthia out of Liverpool. His career took him all over the world. Returning ashore, he took up a position with PYE Telecommunications Ltd. in Glasgow as a VHF Technician. Upon returning to Hull, he worked on the docks at Hull with Redifon as an Electronics Technician where he became involved in the layout and installation of radio and navigation equipment for new trawlers. This involved him travelling to Poland where the trawlers were built. After marrying, David set up his own independent marine electronics company (Electronics Marine Limited), working out of St. Andrews Dock, and working with Hull's trawling industry.

In 1960 he found himself overboard in the Pacific surrounded by sharks. This, and the later loss of the Gaul in 1974 led to David looking to improve maritime safety. Thanks to his experience and career in electronics and communication, he set about inventing a rescue beacon – the world's first Personal Locator Beacon (Locat). The Beacon has since gone on to save thousands of lives. More to do with David's career and life can be read in his biography at DI 27/7.

The device was first used when adventurer, Ken Kerr decided to row singlehandedly across the Atlantic. 750 miles to the east if Newfoundland Ken's yacht capsized. He was rescued by a passing cargo thanks to the Personal Locator Beacon. His Personal Locator beacon has been purchased across the globe, including America where David met with Senator Ted Kennedy at Capitol Hill.

Custodial history: Deposited by David Marshall in 2025

Description: Correspondence, presscuttings etc. relating to the development of the Personal Locator Beacon and personal items relating to his career at sea.

Extent: 1 box, 2 folders/0.32 linear metres

Access conditions: Access will be granted to any accredited reader

Hull History Centre: Records of David Marshall

C DI 27/1	Collection of documents, letters, presscuttings pertaining to the conception and development of the Personal Locator Beacon 1 file	1975-2024
C DI 27/2	Presscuttings and related material pertaining to conception and development of the Personal Locator Beacon 1 file	1975-2016
C DI 27/3	Correspondence and related material regarding David Marshall's visit to the former Soviet Union In an interview with David Marshall in the Yorkshire Post from May 2016, the Soviet Union were interested in acquiring the Personal Locator Beacon (see C DI 2025/1) but he cites one of the calling in a part of his overdraft which prevented the supply to the Soviet Union 1 file	30 Sep 1991- 20 May 1992
C DI 27/4	Article in Safety at Sea titled 'The Beacon Man'. A talk with David Marshall, inventor of the personal locator beacon on the 50th anniversary of its launch. 1 item	5 Sep 2024
C DI 27/5	Article from the 'Beverley Life' titled Beverley's Beacon Man - a signally successful life by Brian Lavery Talks about half a century of saving lives at sea with David Marshall, pages 22-23 1 item	Nov 2024
C DI 27/6	An assessment of the technologies for the location of persons lost at sea in the UKCS Prepared by the GEC-Marconi Communications Limited for the Health and Safety Executive. Pages 38-45 have markers. These relate to personal locator beacons, SART and HF radar. 1 item	1996
C DI 27/7	The Beacon Man Autobiography of David Marshall 1 item	2016
C DI 27/8	Extract from the Log Book of the vessel Carinthia Voyage to Montreal from Liverpool, Montreal to Liverpool. Lists crew and incidents involving members of the crew 1 bundle	9 May 1958- 24 Oct 1958

Hull History Centre: Records of David Marshall

C DI 27/9	Extract from the Log Book of the vessel Hartismere Provides crew engagement details 1 bundle	16 Apr 1959- 1 Jan 1961
C DI 27/10	Items relating to David Marshall Certificate of Competence in Radiotelegraphy; Extract of Extract of David Marshall's seamen's certificate with photograph and description; List of crew and report of character, including David Marshall, though the vessel and date is unknown 3 items	May 1958
C DI 27/11	Photographs Prints of three photographs showing private Navy School, RMNS Bearwood, Berkshire; a young David Marshall at the private Navy School, RMNS Bearwood; Photograph showing David Marshall stood with Edward Heath 1 item	c.1951
C DI 27/12	Typescript of an article by Barry Pickthall titled 'Life saving equipment goes on trial' Article appeared in August 1989. Publication unknown 1 item	Aug 1989
C DI 27/13	Photocopy of two cards in possession of David Marshall's mother One card from Mark and Edith Sykes best wishes for Christmas and the New Year, the second to celebrate the Coronation of King Edward VIII at the home of Sir Seymour and Lady King. These items may have been presented to David Marshall's grandparents 1 item	1902-c.1919