

## TOUR GUIDE PLUNGES INTO WAVES TO SAVE WOMAN



**BRAVERY:** Iain Purdie saved the woman who got into difficulties after going for a midnight dip after boozing

# Hero of the Vietnamese sea rescue

A BOOZY tourist in Vietnam was saved from almost certain death by a Tyneside guide.

Iain Purdie was running an overnight trip through the country's spectacular Halong Bay region, a network of mountains, islands and caves.

People travel from all over the world to sample the waters and sail among stunning limestone cliffs.

But paradise turned to peril when an English backpacker had been secretly downing vodka before deciding to go for a midnight swim.

The party had come ashore on a small island and were enjoying refreshments before the drama began.

Wading deep into the dark waters, dangerous riptides caught the woman by surprise as the alcohol suddenly took effect, leaving her struggling to stay afloat.

But the situation was

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swiftly brought under control by Toon fan Iain, who plunged into the waves and hauled the girl onto a nearby speedboat moored off the coast of the island.

The 36-year-old, from Low Fell, Gateshead, said: "Around midnight, we aim to see the bioluminescent plankton and just mess about. It's great fun."

"She had been drinking after sneaking her own vodka onto the island in a plastic water bottle, and was three sheets to the wind - it just hadn't hit her."

"After about 15 minutes in the water, she suddenly realised she couldn't co-ordinate well enough."

"Between three of us, we managed to haul her onto the speedboat that's moored up a distance from the shore."

"Her friend sat with her while she wobbled about, and

I swam back to shore bringing back a life jacket which we got her into.

"She managed to get up on the side and jump into the water where two of her friends - lifeguards - towed her to shore."

"I carried her from there to the bar where we gave her water."

It was yet another adventure for Iain, who has taken a summer sabbatical to work in Vietnam where he also volunteers for a children's welfare charity called Blue Dragon.

Three years ago the teacher made headlines when he walked 1,000 miles around Europe to raise money for the charity.

He never took off his Toon shirt for the entire walk.

Iain said of the girl, who would prefer not to reveal her name: "People kept coming up to check on her and make sure she was OK."

"She was fine, if somewhat embarrassed, come morning."

## Bin fire costs £2,500

ANOTHER £2,500 has gone up in smoke.

That's the cost of putting out a wheelie bin fire after arsonists struck.

The latest blaze took place outside a house on Blue House Lane, Concord, Washington, at 5.15am yesterday after a bin was put out for emptying.

Fire chiefs are now urging residents to only put bins out on the day of collection.

"They are a target for vandals or accidental fires by people putting discarded cigarettes in them," said Crew Manager Eddie Olliver, based at Sunderland West Fire Station.

"Each wheelie bin fire costs £2,500. That's the cost of the fire service operation, replacing the bin and repair bill."

"There is also the environmental issue of carbons released into the atmosphere from the plastic and discarded rubbish which makes the area look unsightly."

## Chance to see designs

FOUR artists' designs to help revamp a seafront walkway go on show this week.

Plans to replace the gates at the entrance to Sunderland's historic Roker Pier are just one part of Sunderland City Council's plans to regenerate the seafront at Roker and Seaburn following a public consultation exercise last year.

The £1.5m Marine Walk project includes creating events spaces, cliffside lighting, large-scale moveable beach pods, which can be used for everything from a base for RNLI lifeguards to mobile seaside classrooms, an interpretation trail and the redesign of the pier gates.

Short-listed artists' designs are on show until next Monday at the entrance to the pier, The Resort office at Roker, Sunderland Civic Centre, The Seaburn Centre and libraries across the city. They can also be viewed online at [www.sunderland.gov.uk/seafront](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/seafront).

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