Lionel Lukin, a London coachbuilder, designed the world’s first ‘unimmergible’ boat and patented it in 1785. Lukin built pockets of air and cork into the structure of the boat so that it would always float.

Four years later, the charitable Crewe Trust placed an order for him to adapt a coble (a type of fishing boat) to his ‘unimmergible’ design. From 1789, this coble was kept at Bamburgh in Northumberland for the purpose of saving lives from shipwreck.

In 1806, Lukin brings his pamphlet The Invention, Principles of Construction, and Uses of Unimmergible Boats to the attention of His Majesty The Prince of Wales to highlight the threat of life lost at sea. He describes the extensive experiments carried out by himself and others on early prototypes of this boat, proving their success.

An article in The Ipswich Journal in 1807 shows how Lukin continued, where requested, to supply ‘unimmergible’ boats to areas of Britain’s coast.