



The Lifeboat 'MONA' Disaster

8th December 1959



Memorial Service, Funerals & Remembrance

From the Local Newspapers of the time

In the wee Kirk near the empty Lifeboat shed (Friday 11th November 1959)



The crew of the Arbroath Lifeboat, and representatives from the crews at Montrose, and Anstruther, were among the many men of the sea who went to St James' Church, the Fisherman's Kirk at Broughty Ferry.

They joined the many hundreds of people from all walks of life who went to the memorial service for the eight men who perished when the Mona was lost.

The order paper said the service was in commemoration of the crew of the Lifeboat, who died on duty at sea in the early morning of Tuesday, December 8, 1959.

Standing alongside the lifeboat men as they gathered in the sparse shelter of the lee of the empty lifeboat shed across the road from the wee kirk were representatives of the Coastguard service

The latter were led by Senior Coastguard David Mearns, Carnoustie, one of the 118 people rescued by the Mona during her 24 years service in Broughty Ferry,. He was the skipper of the Abertay Lightship when she was abandoned on the orders of the harbour engineer after drifting off station in a gale in January 1937.

Mr Mearns came ashore from the lightship to become a coastguard. It was he who spotted the stranded Mona on Tuesday morning and was the first man aboard her.



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The Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses were represented by their superintendent Mr J. R. Cadger. The Commissioners' afloat service includes the North Carr Lightship, for which the Mona was heading when disaster struck. Because of the lull in the East Coast Storm, it was possible to put the crew back on the North Carr on Thursday 10th November to have her towed to Leith.

The Helicopter crews who took part in the North Carr operation and in the search for the Mona were represented by their Flight Commander, Flight Lieutenant J. O'Hara, commanding C Flight, 228 Squadron, Leuchars, and one of their navigators, Flight Lieutenant F. Moreau, they also represented the station commander at Leuchars.



The Church only seats 450 and the service was relayed to another 300 in the church Hall and to hundreds who stood in Fort Street on a cold windy, wet forenoon.

People started to queue outside the church doors an hour before the service began, but few of them were able to get in.

The R.N.L. I. Flag flew at half mast from the Lifeboat Shed as did many other flags in Broughty and Dundee.

Lord Provost William Hughes and Mrs Hughes, the Lady Provost, went first to the lifeboat shed, where they met other dignitaries, including Earl Howe, chairman of the R.N.L.I.; Lord Saltoun, chairman of the Scottish council; Captain W.F. Keay,



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R.N.V.R., (ret'd) president of the Dundee branch; Colonel A.D. Burnett-Brown, national secretary; Commander S.W. F. Bennets, and the other officials who have been investigation the disaster on the spot.

Others present at the service included the Rev J. Fraser McCluskey, former minister of Broughty East Church and now New Kirkpatrick Church, Bearsden; Mr Girling, representing Mr Marples, Minister of Transport and Mr B.W. Cannon, representing the Merchantile Marine Office of the Customs and Excise.

Relatives of the crewmen arrived in small groups. The rain stopped just before the service began. A quietness descended over the area as almost all traffic stopped, shops closed, householders drew their blinds.

The service in the Church was relayed to the crowd outside and to people who gathered in small groups in nearby streets.

In his address the minister of St James, the rev Malcolm Ritchie, said there were occasions when gallantry shone out. There were times when human nature seemed to rise higher than even they thought, and yet it seemed sunk in a kind of gloom, and they wondered if the brightness was more firm than that gloom.





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Centrepiece of the many floral tributes in the church was a large evergreen anchor, on which the Lifeboat colours were picked out in red and white carnations. Red floribunda roses intermingled with silver leaves gave a chain effect on the anchor. Other tributes had sent from the coxswains and crews of lifeboats round the British Coast.

It is proposed that the floral tributes left in the church will be transferred today to the empty lifeboat shed.

Soon after the service ended the first of the funerals of the seven men whose bodies have been recovered took place.

Small crowds gathered outside the homes of the six Broughty Ferry men who perished.

The Last Tributes.

The funeral cortege of Alexander Gall, 19 David Street, was the first to pass slowly through Broughty Ferry's rain-swept streets.

As the mourners left the house a group of men from the lifeboat houses at the corner of the street joined the cortege.

The coffin covered by the red and white Lifeboat Flag, was almost hidden beneath a mound of wreaths.

At the graveside in Barnhill Cemetery, 200 mourners had gathered to pay their last tributes. They included two busloads of men from the Caledon Shipyard. The Rev Malcolm Ritchie conducted the service.

The funeral of Coxswain Ronald Grant was attended by 300 mourners at Eastern Cemetery, Dundee.

Two busloads of men from the Caledon Shipyard were present and another bus brought representatives of the Arbroath Fishing community.

The service was conducted by the Rev J. E. Lyon, Victoria Street Church, Dundee.

Three of the funerals were to Dundee crematorium.

The first was the double funeral of mechanic John Grieve and his son John, every seat with the exception of those reserved for the family mourners was taken half an hour before the service began.

Two busloads of fishermen from Arbroath, coastguards, Caledon Shipyard and harbour workers were in the congregation, which overflowed from the pews and stood five deep in the side aisles. The service was conducted by the Rev Mr Ritchie.

Many of the mourners stayed on for the funeral of George Smith, second coxswain who was well known at Dundee harbour. The Rev T. Lowdon Cox, West Church conducted the service.

Four hundred people including 200 men from the Caledon attended the funeral of James Ferrier at Barnhill Cemetery. The service was conducted by Mr Ritchie.



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Most of the mourners remained at the cemetery for the funeral of David Anderson .
Mr Ritchie also conducted the service.



*Laying the Wreaths in the River Tay near the Abertay
Lightship, near where the Lifeboat capsized*