

STEAMSHIP  
**FORFARSHIRE,**

CAPTAIN HUMBLE,

Which Struck on the Fern Islands

*On her Voyage to Dundee, on the night of the 7th Sep-  
tember, 1838, and*

THE HEROIC CONDUCT

OF

**GRACE DARLING.**

*In venturing her life, and rescuing the Survivors from  
destruction.*



TOTAL LOSS

OF THE

FORFARSHIRE.

The Forfarshire steamer, a vessel of about 300 tons burthen, under the command of Mr. John Humble, formerly master of the Neptune of this port, sailed from Hull, on her voyage to Dundee, on the evening of Wednesday, the 5th of September, 1838, about half-past six o'clock, along with the Pagasus and Innisfail for Leith, with a valuable cargo of bale goods and sheet iron; and having on board about twenty-two cabin and nineteen steerage passenger; as nearly as could be ascertained, Captain Humble and his wife, ten seamen, four firemen, two engineers two coal trimmers, and two stewards.

Previous to leaving Hull, the boilers had been examined and a small

leak closed up ; but when off Flambro' Head the leakage re-appeared, and continued for about six hours' not, however, to much extent, as the pumps were able to keep the vessel quite dry. The engine-man, Allan Stewart, who furnished these particulars, also states that he had frequently seen the boiler as bad as it was on this occasion. The fireman Daniel Donovan, however, represents the leakage as considerable, so much so that two of the fires were extinguished ; but they were relighted after the boilers had been partially repaired. The progress of the vessel was of course retarded, and three steam-vessels passed her before she had proceeded far. The unusual bustle on the Forfarshire, in consequence of the state of the boilers, attracted the notice of several of the passengers, and Mrs. Dawson, a steerage passenger, who was one of the survivors, stated, that even before the vessel left Hull, so strong was her impression, from indications on board, that " all was not right" that

if her husband, who was a glassman, had come down to the packet in time she would have returned with him on shore.

In this inefficient state, the vessel, with about sixty individuals on board, was sent out and proceeded on her voyage, and passed through the "Fairway," between the Fern Islands and the land, about six o'clock on Thursday evening. She entered Berwick bay about eight o'clock the same evening, the sea running high, and the wind blowing strong from the N.N.E. From the motion of the vessel, the leak increased to such a degree, that the firemen could not keep the fire burning. Two men were then employed to pump water into the boilers, but it escaped through the leak as fast as they pumped it in. About ten o'clock she bore up off St. Abb's Head, the storm still raging with unabated fury. The engine soon after became entirely useless, and the engine-man reported that they would not work. There being great danger of drifting ashore, the sails were

hoisted fore and aft, and the vessel got about in order to get her before the wind, and keep her off the land. No attempt was made to anchor. The vessel soon became unmanageable, and the tide setting strong to the south, she proceeded in that direction. It rained heavily during the whole time, and the fog was so dense that it became impossible to tell the situation of the vessel. At length breakers were discovered close to leeward, and the Fern Lights which about the same period became visible, relieved all doubt as to the imminent peril of all on board. An attempt was made to run the vessel between the Fern Islands, but she refused to answer her helm, and at three o'clock on Friday morning she struck with tremendous force against the outer or Long-stone Island.

A portion of the crew, intent only on self-preservation, had lowered the starboard-quarter boat down, and left the ship, amongst whom was the first mate, James Duncan. The stroke of

the vessel on the rock was regarded as the signal of death. The master lost all self-possession, and his wife, who was on board with him, sought in cries of anguish and despair the protection which, alas, he could not extend. The cries of females on deck, mingled with the roaring of the ocean and the screams of the wild fowl disturbed from their resting-places, whilst the men, clinging to the vessel awaited in silence their inevitable fate. Most of the cabin passengers were below, and among of them, only Mr. Ruthven Ritchie, of Hill of Ruthven, Pirthshire, was saved. On being awoke, he arose instantly, and seizing his trousers, rushed upon deck from whence, observing the sailors leaping into the boat, he, with an extraordinary effort, by means of a rope, swung himself into it, and was thus miraculously preserved. The uncle and aunt of this gentleman made a desperate effort to get into the boat just as it was leaving the wreck, and, in endeavouring to leap on board they fell into the sea and perished in

his sight. He had nothing on all the time he was in the boat but a shirt and a pair of trowsers; and his employment whilst in it was baling out the water with a pair of shoes for a "howskelly." The escape of the boat was remarkable. There was only one outlet by which it could escape being dashed by the breakers against the island, and that outlet was taken without the parties being aware of it. The boat's crew passed through the mighty current uninjured, and, after being exposed in an open boat all night, were picked up about eight o'clock on Saturday morning by a Montrose boat, and carried into Shields. Mr Ritchie had fortunately some sovereigns in the pockets of his trowsers, which he brought out of the cabin, and these enabled him to procure clothes soon after being landed. The following is a list of the crew and passengers brought into Shields:—  
 John Matson, second mate; James Hill, Alexander Murray, Robert Fox, Allan Stewart, engineer; Jas. Hall, coal-trimmer; David Grant, Ruthven



Ritchie, farmer ; and James Duncan, first mate. Mr. Ritchie proceeded to Bamburgh, to enquire into the fate of his fellow passengers, and thence he went to Edinburgh on his way home to communicate the melancholy intelligence to his friends. The mate and some other of the crew reached Dundee on the Tuesday following.

The vessel struck aft the paddle boxes, and not above three minutes after the few survivors had rushed upon deck, a second shock separated her in two parts—the stern, quarter-deck, and cabin, being instantly carried away with all upon them, through a tremendous current called the Piper Gut, which is dangerous even in temperate weather, running between the islands at the rapidity of six miles an hour, and in tempestuous weather becomes terrific ; whilst the fore part of the vessel remained fast on the rock. The captain stuck to the wreck till washed overboard with his wife in his arms, and both were drowned.

The situation of the few passengers who remained on the fore part of the

vessel was perilous in the extreme; Placed on a small rock surrounded by the sea, which threatened to engulf them, and their companions having but just before been swept away from them, they were clinging to life whilst all hope of relief was sinking within them, and crying for help, whilst the tempestuous billows drowned their feeble shrieks and defied their puny efforts to escape. Their cries, however, were not unheard. Their shouts of distress fell upon the ear of Miss Grace Horsley Darling, who, with her father, Mr. W. Darling occupies the outer Fern Lighthouse. She awakened her parent, and at daybreak he launched his boat and prepared to proceed to their rescue.

The state of the tide and of the weather was such as to render any attempt to reach the wreck extremely dangerous; and the old man, who had never before known the qualings of fear, was loth in such a tremendous gale to rush, as he considered, on certain death. After watching the wreck for some time, they discovered, from some movement, that living beings were still clinging to it, and the gallant female









who partook of her fathers generous sympathy as she acknowledged the relationship of flesh and blood, with matchless intrepidity, seized the oar and entered the boat. This was enough the noble parent followed, and with the assistance of the fair sailor, conducted the skiff over the foaming billows to the spot, where the wreck appeared. By a dangerous and desperate effort the father was landed on the rock, and to preserve the frail-coble from being dashed to pieces, it was rapidly rowed back among the awful abyss of waters, and kept afloat by the skilfulness and dexterity of this noble minded young women. At length the whole of the survivors, consisting of five of the crew and four of the deck passengers, were taken from the wreck, and conveyed to the lighthouse, where the same tender hand administered to their wants, and anxiously, for three days and three nights, waited on the sufferers, and soothed their afflictions. By the assistance of the crew they were enabled to bring the coble and its burthen to the Long-stone Islands. It is impossible to speak in too high terms of this unparelled act of humanity bravery and disinterestedness. This perilous achievement—unexampled in the feats of female fortitude—was witnessed by the survivors in silent wonder. The main

land could not be reached, from the state of the weather, till Sunday, and during the whole of this time the attentions of the heroine were indefatigable.

The names of the individuals saved from the wreck of the Forfarshire, by Mr. Darling and his daughter are—John Kidd, fireman of Dundee; Jonathan Ticket, cook, of Hull; John Macqueen, coal trimmer, Dundee; John Tullock, carpenter, Dundee; John Nicholson, fireman, Dundee, of the crew. D. Donovan fireman, and free passenger of Dundee; James Keeley, weaver, Dundee; Thomas Buchanan, baker, Dundee; Mrs. Dawson, bound to Dundee, passenger. The entire number saved is eighteen, of whom thirteen belonged to the vessel, and five were passengers. The remainder on board perished.

The wreck of the steamer was seen from North Sunderland, on the morning of the wreck, about six o'clock, when signals were hoisted and guns fired immediately, but men could not be found to go off in the life-boat. After some delay seven persons volunteered their services, and set out in a four-oared coble. The boat shipped several seas in the course of her perilous voyage, and on their way they spoke a steam-vessel of London, going north, and requested the captain to



proceed to the wreck, offering at the same time to pilot the vessel, as they could easily have done to within a few yards of the lee of the rock in seven fathoms water. The captain however, declined, and the men in the coble, after much exertion, succeeded in reaching the wreck. They found three bodies, one of them dressed in black, apparently about forty years of age, who, from papers found on his person, is supposed to be the Rev. John Robb, of Dunkeld. The other two were brother and sister, the boy eleven and the girl eight years of age, and children of Mrs. Dawson, who was saved by the exertions of Mr. Darling and his daughter. They also took a quantity of copper and some light articles which would soon have been washed away. The storm raged with unabated fury, and in attempting to return, they were compelled to put in at Longstone Lighthouse, which they reached with much difficulty, where they were obliged to remain two days and two nights in a temporary building, the waves occasionally bursting in and obliging them to seek shelter in the Lighthouse tower, which was occupied by Mr. and Miss Darling, and the persons they had saved from the wreck. They made another attempt to reach North Sunderland on Sunday, but they were obliged

to run in at Bednel, where they remained till the following day. They visited the wreck on Monday, and found the body of an Irishman, named John Gallehar, who lately resided at Dundee. The names of the brave and meritorious individuals who ventured their lives from North Sunderland are as follow :— Wm. Robson, James Robson, Michael Robson Wm. Swain, Brooks Darling (brother to Miss Darling,) Thomas Cuthbertson, and Robert Knox. They behaved most gallantly.

The wreck was discovered from Bamburgh Castle early on Friday morning, when a signal was hoisted, and an alarm-gun fired along the shore to apprise the fishermen of the calamity. The life-boat could not be launched from the extremely boisterous state of the weather, but every thing was done that could be devised ; and Mr. Smeddle, the principal agent, Mr. Hamilton, and other attached to the castle, were most indefatigable in their exertions.

On the following Monday the four bodies were brought to the castle, and on the next day an inquest was held before Stephen Reed Esq., in the absence of T. A. Russell, Esq., when after a patient investigation, the coroner summed up, and the jury returned a verdict to the following effect :—Wrecked on board

the Forfarshire steam-packet by the imperfections of the boilers, and culpable negligence of the captain not putting back to port. Deodand on the vessel, £100, being one-half of the estimated value of that part of the vessel and machinery left upon the rock.

One of the most heart-rending circumstances connected with this melancholy event occurred during the night when the survivors were on the rock. The vessel became a total wreck in less than a quarter of an hour after she struck ; and those that were fortunate enough to get on the rock suffered severely from the cold, and from the heavy seas which washed over them at intervals. The clothes were mostly torn off, and from continued exertions they were reduced to a state of complete exhaustion. The most agonizing spectacle was that of Mrs. Dawson, with her two children, a boy and a girl, eight and eleven years of age, firmly grasped in each hand ; there she held them in the agonies of despair, long after the buffetings of the waves which drove them to and fro, had deprived them of existence. She was severely injured and remained at Bamburgh, unable to proceed homewards. Donover was also much hurt ; and he stated that he lay for three hours holding on by a spike nail.

It is impossible to tell with certainty the number of those who have suffered, inasmuch as no entries were made when the passengers embarked. One of the survivors states the number at forty-two, and another at forty seven. As only five are known to be saved, the probable loss of life will be between thirty seven and forty-five passengers; and the master and his wife, and seven of the crew, will make the total loss between forty-six and fifty-one persons. The following are the names of some of the sufferers:—

Captain Humble and wife; the Rev. John Robb, Dunkeld; Mr. Bell, factor to Lrd Kinnoul; Mrs. Allison, Peasholme house, York with son and grandson; Miss Martin, of No. 28, St. James'-street, Aberdeen, and one child. This lady had considerable property on her person; it is said 800 sovereigns, in some part of her dress. Mr. and Mrs. Allen, and one child, said to be last from Russia; Mr. Robert Allison, of Dundee; Mr. John and William Grant, of Louth, Lincolnshire; Mr. Paston and a friend; Mr. Scott, of Dundee, and his son about seven years of age, Mr. Brown and Mr. McCloud; Mr. Arnett, and two friends; Mrs. Patrick, of Hull, wife of Captain Patrick, of the Clara.

There are among the sufferers three gentlemen belonging to Perth, one to Fife, and one to St. Petersburg. A female steerage passenger lost two children, one was drowned and the other died, in her arms. Amongst the persons brought to the spot from a distance was one gentleman who had lost his wife, son and grandson, another his mother and brother.

The only part of the vessel which remained, consisted of the fore-castle, part of the engine, paddle-wheels, anchor, cable, foremast and rigging. One of the boilers was washed to sea, while the other two were thrown on the rocks broken. The engine, which was 180 horse power, was greatly damaged. A quantity of new boiler plate was found among the wreck. A part is sunk a little to the south of Hawker's rock, and, as it is supposed, the bodies of several persons who have not been found were in it, a rope was attached to it for the purpose of raising it, in order to satisfy the anxiety of their surviving friends. The cargo is stated to have been very valuable, having been insured to the amount of £4,000; but only three boxes of soap have been discovered. Parts of the wreck have been thrown on shore at Hauxley, Amble, Hartley, and other parts of the coast of Northumberland. The stern of the vessel, with the name, a hair covered trunk, and a corded box was seen on Monday, the 10th of September, from the deck of the London Merchant steam-vessel, floating off Seaham. The stern was also seen, near the same place, from the City of Edinburgh steamer, the day before. The brig Williams, Captain Blyth, of Sunderland from Hamburg when about five miles from the land off Hartle-pool, on the same day, fell in with a quantity of wreck, which is supposed to have belonged to the Forfarshire steamer. Among other materials was the poop of a vessel, together with a box about fifteen feet long, and two and a half feet square, containing a quantity of the machinery. Search was long made

for the bodies of the unfortunate sufferers and the property of the vessel; and every assistance was rendered by the agents at Bamburgh Castle, as well as by the fishermen and revenue officers on the coast.

The Forfarshire was a new vessel, having been little more than two years at sea. She first sailed from Dundee in May 1836; she sailed weekly between Dundee and Hull, and had engines of 120 or 200-horse power. The Captain (Mr. John Humble) belonged to Shields, and served his apprenticeship to the sea in one of the collier sloops trading between that place and Newcastle. The first steamer he was in was a small Tug-boat, which belonged to Shields, called the Tarslet; he afterwards commanded another steamer, called the Neptune, which sailed between Hull and Newcastle. He also was some time mate of the Eclipse, the Newcastle and Leith boat already mentioned.

Grace Darling's brilliant action, while it astonished all, that beneath a woman's slender frame, so noble, so heroic a heart could beat raised their enthusiastic delight. Subscriptions to reward this noble girl for her unparalleled bravery were set on foot, and many handsome presents from noble personages together with the sum of seven hundred pounds, were presented to her. Ringing as the world did with her achievement, and pleased, as she doubtless was, at its approbation, she refused all the offers that were made to raise her to a higher sphere, content to remain in her sea-girt home amongst her humble friends.

Ere long, and before the applause at her noble action had died away, the fatal disease, consumption, had fastened upon her. In spite of all the efforts of her friends to remove this ever fatal complaint, she sunk under it; and, on the 20th of October, 1842, without a groan or murmur, she died.

## LOSS OF THE AMERICAN SHIP, GOLDEN RULE,

CAPTAIN AUSTIN, COMMANDER.

*Which sprung a Leak September 29, 1807, and of the  
Sufferings of the Crew.*

The ship, Golden Rule Captain Austin, sailed from Willcasset with a cargo of timber, September 8, 1807.

On the 29th, she experinced a severe gale from the south-east, and at eight o'clock, a. m. they discovered she had sprung a leak, and had four feet water in her hold; at nine it had increased to eight feet, notwithstanding they had two pumps going, and were throwing her deck load overboard, which they were enabled to do very slowly from the sea driving the planks about the deck, and wounding the crew.

About ten o'clock, the water had risen to twelve feet, and the gale had also evidently decreased; the crew and all on board were quite exhausted; and going into the cabin, they found she was welling fast. The main and mizen-masts were now cut away, to prevent her upsetting, and she was quite clear of her deck load. At eleven o'clock she was full up

to her main deck, and all her bulk heads were knocked away.

It now occurred to the crew, to endeavour to save some bread; and Mr. Boyd, the first mate, with great resolution, went into the cabin, and gave out some bread, and two bottles of rum; but so rapidly did she fill, from the timber of her cargo shifting, that he was forced to break through the sky-light to save himself.

Their small stock of provisions was now put into the binnacle, as a secure place. It had been there but a few minutes, when a tremendous sea struck them, and carried away the binnacle. They had now little hope left, the wheel was broken, and they proceeded to secure themselves as well as they could, some in the fore-top, and the rest were lashing themselves to the taffrail; before they could accomplish the latter plan, another sea, if possible, more heavy than the former, hurried them all from their places, and washed two of their poor men overboard: they were seen swimming for the ship a short time, when a wave hurried them from the sight of their lamenting comrades.

The ship's deck was now blown up, and her side stove in, and they had all given themselves up, when on the 30th, at noon, they were roused by the cry of "A sail!" and they had the satisfaction to see her bear down for them. About three she came alongside. She was the brig George, of Portland, and Captain Wildrige sent his long-boat, and took them from the wreck.

THE END.