



Crew of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat

Who perished in the Mary Stanford Lifeboat Disaster
15th November 1928

Herbert Head (47)
Coxswain of the boat

Joseph Stonham (43)
2nd Coxswain

Henry Cutting (39)
Bowman

Leslie George Clark (24)

William Thomas Albert Clark (27)

Albert Ernest Cutting (26)

Roberts Redvers Cutting (28)

Arthur William Downey (25)

Morriss Downey (23)

James Alfred Head (19)

John Stanley Head (17)

Walter Igglesden (38)

Charles Frederick David Pope (28)

Robert Henry Pope (23)

Lewis Alexander Pope (21)

Albert Ernest Smith (44)

Charles Southerden (22)

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
JOHN 15: 13

Photo: Steve Tollett

MARY STANFORD LIFEBOAT HOUSE RYE HARBOUR



Photo: Jacqui Stanford

On 15th November 1928 at 6.45 a.m. the Mary Stanford Lifeboat with her crew of 17 was launched from this lifeboat house into a south-westerly gale with winds in excess of 80 miles per hour raging in the English Channel to save a stricken vessel – not one of these brave Rye Harbour men ever returned.

This is the biggest loss of life from a single lifeboat in the history of the RNLI, and this Grade II Listed boathouse remains one of the most important buildings in the history of Rye Harbour.

**WE HAVE DONE THAT WHICH WAS OUR
DUTY TO DO**

By becoming a Friend of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat House - you are showing your support for the preservation and restoration of this important historical building 'The Mary Stanford Lifeboat House'

Mary Stanford Lifeboat House
Rye Harbour

Dabchick Cottage
Morlais Place
Winchelsea Beach
East Sussex
TN36 4LG

Phone: 01797 226908
Email: jacqui.stanford@lineone.net

Thank you for your support

A charity registered in England: 1126067

Mary Stanford Lifeboat House

At 5.00 a.m. the maroons were fired to rescue the crew from the 'Alice of Riga' a Latvian vessel which had been involved in a collision with a large German Ship 'Smyrna', suffering the loss of her rudder and a hole torn in her side, 8 miles south west of Dungeness. The crewmen and launchers, both male and female, battled against the wind to the lifeboat house almost 1.25 miles from Rye Harbour. The weather was so bad that it took three exhausting attempts to finally launch the Mary Stanford off the beach at 6.45 a.m.. The 17 RNLI crewmen rowed this "non-self righting 14 oar pulling and sailing Liverpool Class Surf Boat" away from the beach with great effort and no motor power to aid them.

At 6.50 a.m. Rye Coastguard received a message saying that the crew from the 'Alice of Riga' had been rescued by the 'Smyrna' and frantic efforts were made by the Signalman to recall the Lifeboat all to no avail. With the blinding spray and driving rain coupled with all of the action going on in the Lifeboat, keeping her head to sea with the oars while the mast and sails were raised, the crew did not see the recall signal.

At approximately 09.00 a.m. the mate of the S.S. Halton saw the Lifeboat 3 miles W.S.W from Dungeness and all appeared okay. The Lifeboat was also seen by a boy sailor on the Smyrna a little later on. At approximately 10.30 a.m. a young lad collecting drift wood at Camber looked out to sea and in a bright shaft of sunlight saw the Lifeboat capsize. He ran home to tell his parents who reported it to Jury's Gap Coastguard at Camber. By midday it had been confirmed that the Mary Stanford had capsized, as she could be seen bottom up floating towards the shore. Over the next 2 hours, no effort was spared in trying to revive the 15 bodies washed ashore, but all died. Three months later the sea gave up the body of Henry Cutting, who was washed ashore at Eastbourne, and the body of the youngest crewman John Head aged 17 was never found.

The impact of the disaster on the Rye Harbour community was devastating and deeply affected all who lived there. The disaster was also felt worldwide, and was front page news over the days that followed. The funeral was attended by hundreds including the Latvian Minister.

The Lifeboat House was never used again.



Rye Harbour Churchyard

THE FUTURE

The Friends of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat House has been formed and fundraising has begun. A Report was submitted to English Heritage and the lifeboat house has gained Grade II Listing so now the future of the building is secured. Fundraising will enable the restoration of the boathouse. A coastal classroom will be formed for use by the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and to bring children who have never seen the sea, nor sat on a beach. Importantly there will be a permanent display to the memory of the crewmen of the Mary Stanford who so bravely gave up their lives that awful day in 1928.

Enjoy the walk from Rye down Harbour Road, through the Nature Reserve to the boathouse. Take a picnic and sit and enjoy the quietness of the area with just the sound of the sea. On the return journey visit the churchyard and see the fitting memorial to those brave men that Rye Harbour are so proud of.

Join the Friends and help us to secure the future of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat House.

FRIENDS OF THE MARY STANFORD LIFEBOAT HOUSE

Membership Form

I wish to become a Friend of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat House to ensure the preservation and restoration of this important historical building to the memory of the crew of the lifeboat Mary Stanford who so bravely gave up their lives on 15th November 1928.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: * _____

Phone: _____

Donation Amount: _____

Cheques payable to: Friends of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat House

I would like to donate via Gift Aid—I am a UK tax payer.
Sign

Date: _____

Please return to:

Jacqueline Mary Stanford
Dabchick Cottage
Morlais Place
Winchelsea Beach
East Sussex
TN36 4LG
Tel: 01797 226908

DPA* By giving us your email address you agree that we may send you information about the Friends of the Mary Stanford Lifeboat House and progress updates.