

Introduction : Lusitania Rescue. (Part One)

**"SOS, SOS, SOS. COME AT ONCE. BIG LIST 10 MILES SOUTH
OLD KINSALE. MFA."**

**The last three letters were the Lusitania's call sign.
When Vice Admiral Coke in Queenstown received his copy of that distress
signal, it must have seemed as though his worst nightmare had come true.**



There are many postings on the internet, books on the subject and indeed documentaries and movies made regarding the Lusitania's demise. However, rather than try and touch upon the larger, more well known vessels, we attempt to report on the lesser known ships, captains and crews or areas of interest that again are not well covered, as these and they should together with all acts of bravery be recorded forever.

The rescue of passengers from RMS Lusitania involves all of these aspects. The peoples of Southern Ireland, Kinsale, Queenstown (now again: Cobh) and surrounding areas, the Courtmacsherry Lifeboat and tugs and trawlers, HMT and RNPS ships etc. Many vessels and brave men and women took part in the rescue operation in seas reported to be infested with U-Boats. These brave people went to aid and recover with little worry of their own safety.

Our Tribute commenced with an enquiry from a relative of Percy Kirby Englefield, married to Martha Englefield of Grimsby, Percy's name is mentioned on the CWGC site and his name is Commemorated on the Chatham Memorial, His vessel HMT/RNPS Bradford was lost herself on the 26th October 1916, off the old head of Kinsale. She was stationed in the area in 1915 and was attached to HMS Colleen. The Colleen was a shore based static ship, at Queenstown. She was a nominal depot ship originally called HMS Royalist.

In this tribute we seek all information on the subject of this rescue operation and ask for all assistance to record all ships and crews involved in the rescue. Again the original information sought was on the involvement of Bradford and her crew during and after this fateful Friday.

It is recorded that first on the scene was the small Manx trawler *Wanderer*, with a crew of seven who, incredibly, rescued about 200 people. Other rescue vessels landed survivors and dead between 8pm and 11pm that night in Cobh, where many were later buried in three mass graves. "We saw the ghastly procession of rescue ships as they landed the living and the dead under flaring gas torches along the Queenstown waterfront," reported Wesley Frost, American consul there. "Sometimes two or three ships waited their turn to discharge bruised women, crippled and half-clothed men and a few wild eyed little children.

Women caught at our sleeves and begged desperately for word of their husbands, while men moved from group to group, seeking a lost daughter, sister or even bride. Piles of corpses began to appear on the shadowy old wharves."

Lusitania

(Newspaper Report)

LONDON, Saturday, May 8. - The Cunard Liner Lusitania, which sailed out of New York last Saturday with 1,918 souls aboard, lies at the bottom of the ocean off the Irish coast.

She was sunk by a German submarine, which sent two torpedoes crashing into her side, while the passengers, seemingly confident that the great swift vessel could elude the German underwater craft, were having a luncheon.

How many of the Lusitania's Passengers and crew were rescued cannot be told at the present. Official statements from the British Admiralty up to midnight accounted for not more than 500 or 600, and unofficial reports tell of several hundreds landed at Queenstown, Kinsale and other points.

Up to midnight 520 passengers from the Lusitania had been landed at Queenstown from boats. Ten or eleven boatloads have come ashore and many more are expected.

A press dispatch says seven torpedoes were discharged from the German craft and one of them struck the Lusitania amidships.

Probably at least 1,000 persons, including many Americans have lost their lives.

The stricken vessel went down in less than a half an hour according to all reports. The most definite statement puts fifteen minutes as the time passed between the fatal blow and the disappearance of the Lusitania beneath the waves.

There were 1,253 passengers from New York on board the steamship, including 200 who were transferred to her from the steamer Cameronia. The crew numbered 665. No names of the rescued are yet available.

THE STORY OF THE ATTACK

The tug, Stormcock, has returned to Queenstown, bringing about 150 survivors of the Lusitania, principally passengers. Among them were many women, several of the crew and one steward. Describing the experience of the Lusitania, the steward said:

" The passengers were at lunch when a submarine came up and fired two torpedoes, which struck the Lusitania on the starboard side, one forward and another in the engine room. They caused terrific explosions.

"Captain Turner immediately ordered the boats out. The ship began to list badly immediately.

"Ten boats were put into the water, and between 400 and 500 passengers entered them. The boat in which I was, approached the land with three other boats, and we were picked up shortly after 4 o'clock by the Storm Cock.

" I fear that few of the officials were saved. They acted bravely. " There was only fifteen minutes from the time the ship was struck until she foundered, going down bow foremost. It was a dreadful sight."

At the time this dispatch was sent from Queenstown, two other vessels were approaching the port with survivors.

The Cunard line received a message saying that a motorboat, towing two boats containing fifty passengers, and two tugs with passengers, was passing Kinsale. A majority of the rescue boats are proceeding to Queenstown.

An Admiralty report states that between 500 and 600 survivors from the Lusitania have now been landed, many of them being hospital cases. Several of them have died. Some also have been landed at Kinsale, but the number has not yet been received.

HIT 10 MILES OFF KINSALE HEAD

This greatest sea tragedy of the war, because of the terrible loss of lives of non-combatants and citizens of neutral nations, took place ten miles off the Old Head of Kinsale about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. A dispatch to the Exchange Telegraph from Liverpool quotes the Cunard Company as stating that " the Lusitania was sunk without warning."

According to a Queenstown dispatch the Lusitania was seen from the signal station at Kinsale to be in difficulties at 2:12 P.M., and at 2:33 she had completely disappeared.

This indicated, the dispatch added, that the liner was afloat twenty-one minutes after what evidently was the beginning of her trouble.

Official announcement was also made here last night by the Cunard Line that the Lusitania remained afloat at least twenty minutes after being torpedoed, and that " twenty boats were on the spot at the time." Sixteen more boats, officials of the line said, had been dispatched to the scene for rescue work.

As soon as the Lusitania's wireless call for assistance was received at Queenstown at 2:15 o'clock, Admiral Coke, in command of the naval station, dispatched to the scene all assistance available.

The tugs Warrior, Stormcock, and Julia, together with five trawlers and the local lifeboat in tow of a tug, were hurried out to sea. It was thought it would take most of them about two hours to reach the spot where the Lusitania was reported to be sinking.

One dispatch received here said the liner was eight miles off the Irish coast when she finally went down.

LONDON TORN WITH ANXIETY

All the afternoon, following the first startling message from Ireland and the fragmentary bulletins, indicating a possibility of heavy loss of life, London waited with intense anxiety for further news.

The anxiety grew steadily through the evening as hour after hour passed without any definite statement from an authoritative source as to the extent of the disaster.

The Cunard offices, which will remain open throughout the night, were besieged by a great crowd, largely composed of women, many of them weeping bitterly as the hours passed and no definite news came of those aboard the Lusitania.

Accommodation was provided inside the offices for those who had relative or friends on the steamer, while hundreds waited outside, eagerly reading the scanty bulletins which told of rescue boats arriving at Kinsale and Queenstown, but gave no names of the saved, and consequently did not allay the anxiety.

FLICKERING GLEAM OF HOPE

There was a gleam of hope in the general gloom soon after 8 o'clock, when this announcement was made unofficially: The Cunard company has definitely ascertained that the lives of the passengers and the crew of the Lusitania have been saved.

This was speedily proved untrue, however, but more optimistic reports still refused to credit the early reports of the swift sinking of the big liner. If it was proved true that her watertight bulkheads would tend to keep her afloat, and if she floated a reasonable length of the time before going down, it was possible that rescuing ships got to her side in time to save all on board.

Owing to the fact that all the news of the Lusitania came through the Admiralty, and that only fragments filtered through at intervals, the crowds got increasingly more impatient, though the Cunard officials posted quickly all bulletins received.

Late in the evening the Admiralty felt compelled to give out notice that it was not holding back any known facts, but did not feel justified in giving out rumors.

AMERICANS BESIEGE EMBASSY

The American Embassy and Consulate and the American newspaper offices were flooded with telephonic inquiries from Americans as to the fate of the passengers on the Lusitania, but there was no definite news there until after midnight, and the only hope that could be held out was that some boats had landed survivors and others had been making for the shore. The Embassy decided to remain open all night, so that any news that was received could be made public.

Up to 1 o'clock no news tending to allay the public anxiety had been received in the city. Then, dispatches issued by the Admiralty, indicated that among the survivors landed at Queenstown were some injured, presumably by the explosion.

A later dispatch from the same source increased the apprehensions in this direction. Those wounded are being sent to the naval and military hospitals. A press dispatch from Queenstown reported that 400 passengers and crew had been landed at Kinsale. This stated that none of the first-class passengers had been saved, but this is proved not true by private dispatches.

An Admiralty statement states, however, that the survivors from the Lusitania landed at Kinsale numbered about eleven.

A private telegram from Clonakiety to Dublin says that several hundred passengers had landed from the Lusitania.

WARNED OF MINES BEFORE

In spite of the warnings that had been received from time to time that the Germans would make an attempt to blow up the Lusitania, Captain William T. Turner expressed no fear for the safety of his ship when he sailed from New York last Saturday.

"I wonder what the Germans will do next?" was his only comment when he read the advertisement in the New York Times sent out by the German Embassy warning Americans that they sailed at "their own risk" on British ships which were liable to destruction in the war zone.

When Captain Turner was questioned by a Times reporter regarding the ship being met off the Irish coast by British torpedo destroyers, he replied:

"The Admiralty never trouble to send out to meet the Lusitania. They only look after the ships that are bringing the big guns over, like the Orduna and the Transylvania, last voyage. On the eastward trip I never saw a warship until we reached Liverpool. The ship is steaming under three sections of boilers and we will average about twenty-two knots if the weather is fine, which ought to bring her into Liverpool about Friday evening.

One of the Cunard officers now in the port, who was on the Lusitania on her last voyage, yesterday confirmed Captain Turner's statement that the liner had not sighted a single warship before arriving at Liverpool.

The above newspaper report is of unknown origin. We include it here in both tribute and to explain a little of the tragedy at the time. Several rescue vessels are mentioned and we continue to search for information on the many more.