

# THE MYSTERY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS

**T**he mystery of the Flannan Islands lighthouse keepers is one of the greatest puzzles in history, a case that has baffled real and amateur detectives for more than a century.

The Flannan Islands are seven uninhabited rocks that rise out of the sea. They form part of the Outer Hebrides, a chain of remote islands off the west coast of Scotland. For centuries, they were a danger for ships, so in 1899, a 75-foot lighthouse was built on the largest of the islands, and three lighthouse keepers were employed.

On 26th December 1900, a steamship sailed to the island carrying three new lighthouse keepers, to relieve the men who had spent

three months alone in the Atlantic. But when they arrived at the lighthouse, they made an extraordinary discovery – there was nobody there! The lighthouse door was unlocked, and inside, everything was tidy, but one of the chairs was knocked over. One rain jacket was hanging on its hook, but the other two had disappeared.



Adapted from The Times

The clocks had stopped. The last entry in the log book was 9 a.m. on 15th December. But of the three keepers, Ducat, Marshall, and MacArthur, there was not a trace.

When the news of the keepers' disappearance reached the mainland, there was a huge amount of media speculation. Some suggested that the men had argued about a woman, and that one had murdered the other two before throwing himself into the sea. Others wondered whether perhaps they had been kidnapped by German agents who were planning an invasion of Britain, using submarines. Some thought they might have been carried away by a sea serpent, or a giant sea bird, or even by a boat full of ghosts. An Edinburgh policeman, Robert Muirhead, was sent to the island to solve the mystery.

## STRANGE AFFAIR AT A LIGHTHOUSE.

### Three Keepers Disappear.

[P.A. TELEGRAM]

Intimation has been received at the Northern Lighthouse Board, Edinburgh, of the loss of the lighthouse staff at the Flannan Islands light-house.

The station was established in December last year, and was staffed by four men, three taking duty and the other having relief.

When the Board's steamer yesterday went to the islands to land the relieving keeper, it was found that the three men last on duty had disappeared, leaving no trace behind. They are the principal keeper (James Ducat) and Thomas Marshall and Donald MacArthur, an occasional keeper.

It is surmised during the storm attempting to save the relieving keeper. The relieving keeper has been temporarily in charge.

## NORTH ATLANTIC

FLANNAN ISLAND

L. Ross

LEWIS

d Find words in the article which mean...

**Paragraph 1**

1 \_\_\_\_\_ (*noun*) something that is difficult to understand or explain  
(*SYN mystery*)

2 \_\_\_\_\_ (*verb*) to confuse sb completely

**Paragraph 2**

3 \_\_\_\_\_ (*adj.*) far away from places where other people live

**Paragraph 3**

4 \_\_\_\_\_ (*adj.*) unexpected, surprising, or strange

5 \_\_\_\_\_ (*noun*) a mark, object, or sign that shows that sb or sth existed or was present (*He disappeared without a ~.*)

**Paragraph 4**

6 \_\_\_\_\_ (*verb*) to find the correct answer or explanation for sth