

Western Mail
April 21st 1926
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LOSS OF THE SUTTON.

INQUIRY OPENED AT
CARDIGAN.

A STABLE SHIP.

MYSTERIOUS FATE OF
12 PERSONS.

Sitting with four assessors, Mr. H. Cloughton Scott, K.C., Wreck Commissioner, opened a Board of Trade inquiry at Cardigan Guild-hall on Tuesday into the loss of the coasting steamer Sutton.

The vessel disappeared with all hands in November last, the first intimation of the tragedy being the discovery of a man's body which had been washed ashore by the sea.

The vessel had a crew of nine, apart from the captain, who was accompanied by his wife and daughter. The bodies of an able seaman and the master's wife, delivered up by the sea a few days later, were the only evidence provided as to the fate of the ship.

Considerable interest has been manifested in the loss of the steamer, and a large number of people crowded into the hall. The vessel belonged to Messrs. Overton and Company, of Liverpool, who on Tuesday were represented by Mr. Kenneth Carpmael. Mr. Alfred Bucknill was for the Board of Trade, and Mr. L. Holmer for the dead captain's relatives.

DISASTER IN SIGHT OF LAND.

Mr. Bucknill said the Sutton left Aberystwyth on November 27 last, under the command of Captain Terretta and a crew of nine. In addition, the master's wife and daughter were also on board. The vessel was bound for Antwerp and left Aberystwyth after dark. The Sutton was never seen again.

On the same night, proceeded Mr. Bucknill, the vessel's lights were seen off Aberporth and they were taken by those who saw them to be signals of distress. When day broke the Sutton had disappeared though none realised what a disaster had occurred within sight of land.

The following Sunday the body of an able-seaman was found on the coast near Aberporth and the next day Mrs. Terretta's body was found. Nothing had ever been seen of any other of those who formed the vessel's complement.

The two main questions for the court were what caused the loss of the ship and what caused the loss of life? Another question was whether rockets, flares or lights were seen by the coastguards or other watchers, or by any other person on the shore and were they recognised as signals of distress.

EVIDENCE INVITED.

Mr. Bucknill said he had been instructed by the Board of Trade to ask the court publicly to invite any person who desired to give evidence to come forward.

Dealing with the cause of the loss of the ship, Mr. Bucknill said the only evidence that they had at present related to the possibility of her cargo having shifted. The ship was built in 1920.

Six months before her loss the Sutton passed Lloyd's No. 1 Survey and there could be no doubt that when she sailed she had ample freeboard and was in stable condition. A strong northerly wind was blowing throughout November 27 and the captain of another vessel proceeding to Antwerp had reported that on the voyage the cargo of his vessel shifted.

ABOLISHED LOOK-OUT STATIONS.

Mr. Bucknill referred to the taking over of the coastguard duties by the Board of Trade from the Admiralty and explained that the Board abolished auxiliary look-out stations at Aberporth and Verwig for various reasons, one being that it was considered the concentration of forces at New Quay and Penrhyn was likely to be more effective than scattering at isolated points.

There were, he said, a rocket-saving apparatus and a volunteer company at Gwbert provided by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Mr. Richard Clarke, registered manager of the steamship Sutton, said that at the time of her loss the vessel was valued at £24,000. The Sutton was not equipped with wireless, but she was supplied with red flares.

Mr. Victor Gray, chief draughtsman to the makers of the Sutton, said the vessel carried two lifeboats and lifebelts and life jackets were also provided. A dozen red lights were carried.

The inquiry will be continued to-day and will take several days to complete.



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W654-0013