

THE "SUTTON" FINDINGS

Loss Due to Shifting Cargo

At Cardigan on Saturday Mr. H. Claughton Scott, K.C., wreck commissioner, who had sat with four assessors to hold a Board of Trade inquiry into the loss of the steamship *Sutton*, with all hands, last November, returned answers to the 12 questions submitted to the Court.

They decided, he stated, that the *Sutton* was in good and seaworthy condition when she left Aberystwyth. The vessel was not supplied with rockets. She was fitted with the usual steam whistle, and supplied with regulation flares, foghorn, and flaring lamp. With regard to the stowing of the cargo of concentrates, the Court held that the weights were so distributed as to make the vessel easy in the seaway, and, so far as could be foreseen at the time of loading, the cargo was properly stowed. Part of the cargo of zinc concentrates was liable to alter its position in the ship, but this was not known at the time when it was loaded. Measures could have been taken to prevent the cargo shifting, but no measures were taken. In the light of present knowledge measures ought to have been taken.

COAST-WATCHING SYSTEM.

Replying to the question as to whether the *Sutton*, after leaving Aberystwyth on Nov. 27, was at any time in distress, the Court stated that presumably the *Sutton* was lost, and, judging from the lights which were seen from the shore, some of which at least might be assumed to have been shown by the *Sutton*, she was in distress about 10 p.m., off Aberporth, the cause being again, presumably, the shifting of her cargo, which caused her to take a heavy list and became unmanageable. She had no rockets, but apparently did display flares or lights in the nature of distress signals. The Court dealt at length with the system of coast watching from Newquay to Penrhyn existing on the night of Nov. 27, and stated that they were of opinion that, provided means of communication by telephone were in proper working order, the system provided for a reasonably sufficient watch being kept, having regard to the requirements of that part of the coast.

As to the question whether the coastguards and other watchers were properly instructed in their duties, the Court held they were. They added that the station officer at Newquay at the time in question failed to understand that he ought to put an auxiliary watchman at Llangranwg on duty whenever he thought the weather was bad enough, but thought he was only entitled to put that watchman on duty in thick weather. The auxiliary watchman at Llangranwg failed to understand that it was not necessary for him on all occasions to await instructions before going on a watch, and that if he were unable to communicate by telephone with Newquay or Fishguard it was his duty to go on watch on his own account if in his opinion the weather conditions made it desirable.

THE LIGHTS.

The Court next dealt with the question as to whether rocket flares or lights were seen by people on shore, and decided the lights were not distinctly recognised by any of the witnesses as signals of distress, though certain witnesses were of opinion they might be. They were not distinctly recognised because they were not of such a distinctive nature as to make them clearly distinguishable from lights ordinarily seen at sea. On that account, the Court could not say that they ought to have been recognised as signals of distress. A good and proper lookout was kept by the coastguard on the night in question. Having regard to the weather conditions, the watcher at Llangranwg should have been put on duty by the station officer at Newquay.

Further, the Court was of opinion that Station Officer Huxtable and Coastguard Pearson ought to have reported the light which they had seen to the hon. secretary of the lifeboat at Newquay, but that their failure to do so was due to an error of judgment on their part. In the absence of any direct evidence, the Court was of opinion that the loss of the *Sutton* and the loss of life consequent thereon was due to shifting of cargo of zinc concentrates in bad weather, which caused the ship to take a heavy and increasing list until she foundered. The loss was not caused by the wrongful act or default of any person. In the opinion of the Court, it was desirable that every merchant vessel of the size of the *Sutton*, and all other seagoing vessels, whether engaged in the coasting trade or otherwise, should be supplied with rockets or shell throwing stars, to be used as distress signals.



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