

## SEAVIEW DROWNING FATALITY.

### THE BODY RECOVERED.

On Saturday night the body of the young Seaview pilot, Percy Ashford Caws, whose drowning we recorded last week, was recovered near the spot where the fatality occurred.

An inquest was held at Osborne Schoolroom on Monday by the Acting Deputy Coroner (J. Eldridge, Esq.). Mr. J. Caws was foreman of the jury. Insp. Hawkins was present on behalf of the police, with Acting-Sergt. Wilson and P.C. Snow.

The CORONER said before they went into the circumstances of the sad occurrence he should like to say that he was sure the jury, as well as himself, very much regretted the accident which had caused the death of their townsman, one, he understood, who was very greatly respected, and whose very promising career had been cut short at such an early age. They all felt the greatest sympathy and commiseration with his relatives, who had suffered such a great loss. It seemed a very sad thing just in the midst of this holiday season, and he was sure the jury, and indeed the whole of Seaview, would wish to convey their very great sympathy with those who had been bereaved.

The FOREMAN endorsed what had been said, and Mr. WALLACE CAWS thanked the Coroner and jury on behalf of the family.

WALLACE CAWS, Seaview, Trinity pilot, said deceased was his brother and his age was 27. He was a Trinity pilot, one of the youngest in the service. Witness saw him at about 6.25 on Bank Holiday morning. He was then in a motor-boat. After the accident witness and others attempted to recover the body. It was eventually recovered on Saturday evening, just before 8 o'clock, at the place where the accident happened. Deceased was quite accustomed to go out sailing. He had been at sea all his lifetime.

HAROLD GURNEY DAVIS, engineer, Seaview, said that on Bank Holiday he and his brother went out for a sail with the deceased, to whom the boat belonged. It was an open rowing boat, about 14ft. long. They had a lug sail, which had been used before. The mast was stepped well in the bow. The sail was about 100 square feet. It was rather a large one for the boat. They sailed straight off the shore and then turned towards Bembridge. Just before they capsized they had turned in towards Seagrove Bay. About two minutes after they turned the boat was caught up on a swell and bore down bow first. She then went right over, bottom upwards. They were all thrown into the water. Witness's brother and deceased got on to the bottom of the boat and then deceased asked witness to go for one of the oars. He started to swim for it, and as he got about a yard away from the boat deceased left the boat and grappled him. They went under the water together. When they came up witness got deceased's grip free and took hold of him again. They could not get back to the boat any more.

The CORONER: Had the boat drifted away?—There was a big swell and we could not swim against it. They turned and witness swam towards the oars, which were from 10 to 14 yards away. Witness got one of the oars under deceased, but he did not stay on it long. Whether that was caused by the swell or not witness did not know.—Q. Were you near him?—I did not leave him all the time.—Q. Were you on the oar?—I stood by him while he was on the oar keeping his head above the waves, but we could not rise to the waves.—Q. What was the last you saw of him?—I had him under the chin and he spoke to me, and then he seemed to lose all consciousness and I let him go.—Q. What condition were you then in yourself?—I was not unconscious. I knew what was going on around me, but I was helpless; all my strength was gone.—Q. Have you any idea at all how long it was after you were thrown out that he sank?—I should say it was about two minutes before I was rescued that I let him go. I do not know how long we were in the water altogether.—Q. We may take it that you held on to him as long as you possibly could?—Yes.—Q. Was he a good swimmer?—No.—Q. I do not think he could swim at all.—Q. Immediately after he went down you were rescued by a boat's crew?—Yes, from Mr. Westray's yacht Kiaora. They took witness ashore. The same boat also picked up his brother. There was a lot of wind on the day in question. There were some nasty puffs, hard puffs. They knew that before they started.—Q. Did you think the sail would be too much for the boat, under the circumstances?—No, we thought it would be all right.—Q. Have you been out with this sail before?—Yes, but not in the same position that we had it on that day.—Q. Where was it before when you went out?—In the forward thwart.—Q. This time it was right up in the bow?—

Yes.—Q. Do you know who altered it?—He altered it himself.—Q. Do you know if he had been out in the boat with the sail in that position?—No, it was only altered on the Saturday.—Q. If it had been in the original position, as the wind was blowing what would have been the effect?—We should have been all right.—Q. When the bows went down she would have recovered?—She would not have pushed her bow down like that.—Q. Did deceased say anything to you in the water?—He said "Come here, Boy" (that is my nick-name); nothing else but that. That was about a minute before I let him go.—Q. Have you any idea what made deceased leave the boat and go after you?—No, not in the least.—Q. If he had been able to keep to the boat he would have been all right?—Yes. When he left the boat my brother and he were as right as possible. I did not touch the boat myself.

LIONEL DAVIS, apprentice engineer, brother to the last witness, said he accompanied them on the day in question. He corroborated the evidence that his brother had given. The boat was sailing very well up to the time that the puff of wind came. After the boat overturned he got up on to the bottom of the boat. Witness could not swim. Deceased got up on the bottom of the boat with him by himself. Witness's brother started swimming for the oars. As soon as deceased saw him swimming after the oars he jumped off the boat after him. Deceased caught hold of him by the chest and they both went under. Deceased did not say anything to witness, who could not imagine why he left the boat. Witness's brother got one of the oars and put it under deceased. As soon as he had the oar under him he seemed to try to get right up out of the water. Then he sank again, but he came up after that. Witness's brother was then near him and took hold of him when he came up. He held deceased up until he was exhausted himself, and then had to let him go. Deceased then sank and did not come up any more. About five minutes elapsed between the time the boat overturned and the time they were rescued.

The CORONER briefly summed up, and said the evidence was very simple and plain. As far as they could see the reason for the accident was the unfortunate alteration, if he might say so, of the place where the mast was. With the choppy sea and the puffy wind that there must have been on the morning of Bank Holiday it made the boat dip down into the water, and consequently, almost necessarily, overturned her. If there had been a calmer sea and a quieter wind things would probably have been all right. It was entirely an accident, and as far as they could see there was no one to blame. The deceased himself unfortunately altered the position of the mast, which might have been the cause of the accident. With regard to the events after the accident, he had asked several questions as to why the deceased should have left an apparently safe position on the boat and swam away, and no explanation could be given of it. One could only imagine that he hardly knew himself what he was doing. As far as the conduct of Harold Davis was concerned they would all be satisfied that he did his level best to save the deceased, even leaving himself in a very exhausted condition. He held deceased up to the last possible moment, doing all that he could. If he could have possibly saved him, no doubt he would have done so.

The jury unanimously returned a verdict of "Accidental death." They also commended the prompt assistance rendered by the crew of the Kiaora, the CORONER remarking that but for their timely help the inhabitants would probably have been mourning the loss of other Seaview men.

The fees of the jurymen and witnesses were unanimously handed to the Foreman, for the purpose of procuring a wreath, and the Coroner asked that he might be allowed to contribute.