



Shipwreck of the Brigantine Caprice Saturday 30 September 1911 off the Wash Marshes

The Captain-owner of the Brigantine Caprice, a Norwegian cargo ship, died along with five members of his crew when his ship foundered in an almost hurricane force gale in the Wash 1911.

The Caprice carried ice into Lynn and outgoing to Norway, was laden with coal.

Six bodies of seaman were washed ashore at various places between Lynn and Hunstanton.

Fisherman cockling at Snettisham, found three bodies that were moved to the Royal Hotel in the village. These three 'unknown sailors' were later buried in the churchyard of Snettisham Church.

It was uncertain if the Captain was one of the buried. His body may well have been washed out to sea.

Two others were found on North Wootton Marshes close to the wreck.

Inquest:-

An Inquest was held at the Red Cat Public House, North Wootton, on the two bodies, found on Wootton Marshes. A Mr R N Wilkin conducted the Inquest. The Rev. A R H Johnson was chosen as Foreman of the Jury. Mr F C Rawlings represented the Norwegian Vice-Consul at Lynn (Mr W Flaxman) and Pc Webb and Acting Sergeant Oliver were also present.

The Coroner said, that before they begin the Inquiry, he wished to say that it was believed that the name of one of the men whose body had been found, was Leif Kristoffersen. This fact had been arrived at from papers found in the pockets of the man, and from reference to a list of the crew, who signed on at the Customs House in Lynn. As they found the name on the papers in the man's pocket and on the papers he signed at the Customs House. He thought it fair to assume that the body was that of the crewmember Leif Kristoffersen.

Pc Jex of the Lynn Borough Police Force stated, that at 7:30am Sunday morning he was with Horace Pratt on the Wootton Marshes looking at the wrecked Caprice. While there, he found the body of a man. He asked Pratt to stand by the body while he went and informed Pc Everett of Castle Rising. The body was lying face downwards partly in the dyke and was cold and still. With Pc Everett and others, he assisted to remove the body to the Red Cat Public House, at North Wootton.

Pc Everett stated that he received information from Pc Jex regarding the body, at noon on Sunday. He at once procured a cart from a Mr James Shipp and had the body removed. Round the body was a Life belt bearing the name "Alice Otto 1." In one of the jacket pockets he found a brown leather wallet in which were some photographs and papers. On the papers he found the name Leif Kristoffersen. Under instructions from the Coroner, he had visited the Customs House Lynn and there, on a list of the crew of the Caprice, he saw the name Leif Kristoffersen--a man who had signed on as a 'deck hand.'

The Caprice left Lynn on Friday afternoon Friday 29 September 1911 and was wrecked off the coast near Hunstanton, on the following day. He also found a silver ring and a collar stud in the pockets of the man.

The body well clothed, the underclothing being very good. The face of the man was badly bruised.

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The Coroner in addressing the Jury said that it was common knowledge to many of them, that the Caprice was wrecked on Saturday 30 September. Many of them had seen the wreck.

The evidence they had had today was the first authentic information they had had as to the crew of the Caprice since the wreck. He knew that it was thought, and many people assumed, that the man on whom he held an Inquest at Wolferton came from the Caprice, but there was no evidence to connect the man, with the vessel. Today they had been able to connect a body found at North Wootton with the Caprice. But there was no evidence to show how the man came by his death. He might have been drowned, or he might have had his head stove in by a spar.

The Jury returned an open verdict.

The Coroner said that it might come into their minds, that no inquest be held on the bodies that were washed up at Snettisham. Whilst he (the Coroner), knew very little, but in his judgement, it was right that they should inquire into each of the cases. It had been in his mind that they might be able to find the body of Henry Anderson, the Captain of vessel.

His interest in this matter was two-fold. (1) In the first case; he should like to have a verdict as definite as possible and next; as Henry Anderson was the owner of the Caprice, was entitled to proceeds of the sale of the wreckage after expenses had been paid.

The Superintendent of Mercantile Marine would sell the wreckage, and after the salvors had been compensated, the remainder of the money would go to the owner. If however, the owner could not be found, the balance would go to the Lord of the Manor, and if there were no Lord of the Manor, would go to the King.

By putting the three bodies found at Snettisham in the ground, they had lost a chance of being able to identify Henry Anderson and thereby removing the difficulties for the disposal of the property. There might be a wife or children who

may lose what they are entitled to. He (the Coroner) had been to great personal trouble in this matter and he had to acknowledge the great courtesy received from the Norwegian Vice-Consul at Lynn.

He was in a position to call two men, who would be able to identify Henry Anderson, dead or alive. He regretted, that these two men had not an opportunity of seeing the three bodies found at Snettisham, prior to their burial, in order to identify the Captain Henry Anderson.

If all the bodies were brought to him in his district he should have to trouble a Jury to go through the same performance that they were doing today. He preferred rather to overdo his duty than to run the risk of under-doing it.

The Coroner went on to thank the Norwegian Vice-Consul for all the trouble he had taken in the matter.

Mr Rawlings said that he would convey the Coroner's remarks to Mr W Flexman.

(2) In the second case; John Barwood, a North Wootton marsh sheppard, stated that at 6:30am Monday morning, he was on the Wootton Marshes looking after his sheep, when he saw the body of a man, lying partly in a dyke. He informed Mr James Shipp of what he found and that the dyke would be covered by water when the tide was in.

Pc Everett stated that while he was at Lynn making inquiries respecting the first case, he informed by Stanley Shipp of the finding of the second body. He went to North Wootton, procured a cart from Mr John Cumberworth, and removed the body, which he found 70 yards from the Shelter Bank to the Red Cat Public House. On the head of the man was a sou'wester. Round the body was a Life Belt with no name on it. The remains were well clothed and in the waistcoat pocket he found a silver watch and chain and in other pockets he found a collar stud and a white handkerchief. On the man's left forearm there was tattooed the head of a woman, the head of.....??

part copy of report taken from a local newspaper at the time. Rerecorded by Mr P J Irwin Red Cat Hotel, North Wootton. 01553 631244