

DRAMA AT SEA

Man drowned on sailing trip

COMPANION PICKED UP BY PLEASURE STEAMER'-

This was the heading for a tragedy that occurred on **27th May 1933**. The trip began innocently enough with two good friends going for a sail from Minnis Bay, but, experienced though they both were, disaster struck and the older man, David Carey, was drowned. The newspaper reporter wrote -

“The body of a man was brought ashore at Herne Bay by a boatman on Sunday evening and identified as that of David Carey of 6 Coastguard Cottages, Minnis Bay, Birchington. He was drowned two weeks previously through the overturning of a small sailing boat named ‘Leslie’. His companion Ted Tumber, and the owner of the boat, had been picked up by the pleasure steamer, ‘Medway Queen’, and landed at Southend’.

From there he made his way back home to Birchington.. The story of the tragic ending to an afternoon’s sailing unfolded in the Coroner’s Court in 1933. Michael Carey (David’s son), also of 6 Coastguard Cottages, Minnis Bay, a bricklayer, had identified the body as that of his father, who was a retired Petty Officer of the Navy. He was 53 and his son last saw his father alive at 2 pm on Saturday May 27th, when the deceased said he was going for a sail with Ted Tumber in his boat. David Carey had been in the boat once before.

He had retired from the Navy 13 years ago and then served for the next 3 years in the Coastguards at Minnis Bay. When this service was closed down in 1923 he was employed by the Atlantic Transport Line on the ‘*Miinnewaska*’ on its American route. He had retired from this job shortly before last Christmas.

Michael Carey identified the body by his father’s check coat, his watch and his compass, plus a pocket book and ring on his finger. Edward George Tumber of Southdown House (207 Canterbury Rd), also a bricklayer, said he owned a 14 ft centre-board, half-deck sailing boat, with one mast and two sails, which he’d owned for two years. Now 23, he had sailed since he was 15, so was well-experienced in our waters. David understood sailing and took the tiller as they set off from the Bay. Ted later took the tiller and all was well until they headed for the Hook Sands beacon. When 120 yards east of it, they ‘gybed’ the boat to run towards the beacon and a broken sea came up behind. The boat slewed round towards the wind, went over on her side and filled with water, with the sails flat on the sea.

Ted got onto the side of the boat and David helped him pull off his thigh boots. To lighten the boat, Ted threw the out-board motor overboard. He then asked David if he could swim to the beacon, but David said no, as the tide was running away from it. “We just sat on the side of the boat and talked about whether anyone would pick us up.” They saw the Margate steamer begin its trip back to Southend, but David was becoming exhausted by then. Unfortunately the crew didn’t see them and David became unconscious soon after the steamer passed. Ted laid him across the side of the boat.

A second steamer came into view and Ted stood on the side of the boat and waved. He was then swept into the sea, but by the time he climbed back on, David was gone. The Medway Queen picked Ted up and his boat was later found near Reculver. The coroner agreed that the main cause of the accident was the tide running one way, while the wind the other. The jury returned a verdict of ‘Misadventure’.