

Rineanna Crash

Inquest On Victims

The inquest on the twelve victims who lost their lives in the crash which took place over Rineanna in the early hours of Saturday morning last was opened in the Courthouse, Ennis, by Dr J B Crockett, Coroner, sitting with a jury.

At the opening of the proceedings Mr O A O'Connell, Esq, representing Trans World Airlines, the company involved, offered on behalf of the company and the people of Eire sympathy to the relatives.

Mr M J Walsh, State Solicitor, joined in the expression of sympathy. He added that this was the first fatal accident at Shannon Airport, which was an international airport, and they hoped that it would be the last of its kind. They wished the survivors a speedy and complete recovery.

The Coroner also expressed his sympathy and paid tribute to the great assistance given by TWA officials, and he also wished to place on record the work done by the Garda, doctors and others in alleviating the sufferings of the wounded.

He was sure that the crew of the plane had acted nobly and gallantly, which people had come to expect from their profession.

The State Solicitor then detailed the incident which led up to the crash, saying that the plane, with its crew of nine and fourteen passengers, including Poles, Americans and French, had left Paris on the night of the 27th inst and was scheduled to call at Shannon airport. It had crashed at 2 a.m. at Inish Maccaughthon, two miles west of Shannon airport. It was a dark and misty night and as a result of the crash twelve people were dead.

Within thirty minutes of the accident taking place, he said, Gardaí from the Shannon airport and rescue squads were on the island attending to the injured and dying.

It was a most difficult place to approach and it was a most commendable thing that within such a short time rescue parties were available.

The first witness was Sergt J Hickey, Shannon airport, who stated that he got a report of the crash at 2.15 a.m. and he proceeded with Inspector Maguire, Gardaí Keene, Walsh, Linnane and Devaney. They got on the island at 2.45 a.m. It was dark and cloudy with a slight mist, half rain and half fog.

They could see the wreckage of the plane with burning, and estimated about an acre of ground.

They searched for survivors. Doctors arrived a short time afterwards and every assistance was given to the survivors.

Frank C Blades, Supervisor of the TWA Passenger Services, owners of the "Star of Cairo," produced a passenger and crew manifest, and said that from these and other articles of clothes and other personal property he identified the deceased and he was satisfied that the identifications were correct.

Dr J B MacClancy, Surgeon, County Hospital, gave evidence of the results of post mortem examination of the bodies; in practically all cases death was due to shock and concussion.

Michael Donohue, Cleenagh House, Newmarket-on-Fergus, deposed that, after being called by his employer, Mr John McNamara, at 2.15 a.m., he heard three reports which sounded like gunshots; on going out he saw a single straight stroke of fire where the plane had gone along the island; he heard a baby screaming, and people crying and shouting for help; the Gardaí were on the island when he crossed to it; where he stood after leaving his home was 60 yards from the island; the mud interlocking was more than six inches deep; at this time the weather was dry; he could not say if it was a dark night, as the fire from the plane lit up the surroundings; there was a fog on the creek.

The State Solicitor, Mr Walsh, said that later on he hoped to be able to produce evidence from the survivors. Some of them were critically ill, and it would be some time before he could tender this evidence.

Colonel Maher, Shannon Airport Manager, interposed at this stage to tender on the Minister for Industry and Commerce sincere sympathy with the relatives of the deceased.

Mr O'Connell said that the TWA Co. was very grateful to the Gardaí, doctors and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood for all the assistance they had rendered.

The foreman of the jury also expressed regret.

The inquest was then adjourned to 25th of January.

Condition of the Injured

Five of the eleven injured who are in Limerick and Ennis hospitals are still said to be in a critical condition.

The five in a critical condition are—Flight-Captain Herbert Tansley, 34; Dudley Hill, 34, a member of the crew; Jean O'Zell, 18, and Edith Augustine Delahy (whose 44 months old son is recovering), all of the United States, and Gunther Labroski, of Neully, near Paris.