

Experts see plane

Mud foils some investigators at Shannon

Members of the Irish-American team of aviation experts investigating Sunday's Shannon Airport crash, ploughed through 900 yards of thick mud across the river estuary yesterday to reach the giant airliner wreckage.

Conditions were so bad that some members of the party had to turn back after sinking deeply in the mud, but others succeeded in reaching the wreckage to make a preliminary examination of the tangled mass of metal in which 83 passengers and crew died within minutes of take-off.

Captain Gerry McCabe, Aeronautical Inspector with the Department of Transport & Power who is in charge of the investigation, was one of those who reached the wreckage. A representative of the American Federal Aviation Agency and Civil Aeronautics Board, who are assisting the Irish authorities, also got there, as did the London Assurance assessor for President Airlines, the American owners of the plane. Said Mr. Duncan Tolmie, the company's International Sales Director: "It was only a preliminary check. I was one of those who had to turn back. Conditions were very bad; some members of the group even lost their hip-length boots as they struggled through the mud".

ROADWAY

A half-gale which blew up the estuary in the afternoon hampered efforts to recover the six bodies still unaccounted for. The Limerick Harbour Board's dredger, Carraghower, which had been used to move the wreckage to enable bodies to be reached, was forced to return to Limerick and the airport rescue launch, the Lua, which had been used to convey rescue workers to the scene and take away bodies, also had to return to base. However, airport officials do not consider it likely that the missing bodies are still in the wreck.

Work continued yesterday on the construction of a road-way from the estuary bank to the wreck to enable the plane's engines, equipment and so much of the wreckage as possible to be brought ashore for detailed expert examination. But this too was hampered by the poor weather conditions and the roadway with its line of tracks for small bogies may not now be completed until tomorrow. Meanwhile, the wreckage is covered twice a day by the tide and it is feared that the longer the delay in recovering parts, the greater the danger of loss of vital evidence in the mud.

INQUEST

A rubber dingy, which could accommodate 20 persons, was recovered yesterday, at Glin, co. Limerick, fifteen miles from the scene of the crash. Seen floating by local creamery manager, Michael O'Connor, it contained a kit bag with emergency supplies of food and medicine.

The inquest on the 77 crash victims recovered today is to be held at the airport this morning by the East Clare Coroner Dr. T.E. O'Connor. The staff from the airport's control tower who were on duty during the plane's take-off will be called to give evidence.

The 44 bodies have now been identified and 10 of these will be flown out to the Continent tomorrow. Identification of 20 bodies so far may not be possible, and these will be buried in Ireland.

Eleven relatives of people killed have now arrived at Shannon and will help in identification.

The official total of bodies recovered from the airline at Shannon rose to 77 yesterday, with confirmation that another had been washed ashore along the estuary. This leaves six still not found.

Accident investigators, American and Irish, continued to examine documents and a small aeroplane belonging to the United States Federal Aviation Agency made survey flights over the airfield runway and the estuary.

German Embassy officials and representatives of the firm that chartered the aeroplane were discussing with relatives arrangements for flying the bodies home tomorrow and Friday.

It is expected that among the first to be returned tomorrow will be the Swiss victims.