

## 1925 Aeroplane Crash at Beresford Gap

*In checking the "A" files in our Museum recently, an item with the above label was missing. It turned up later with another piece with a similar label – now under "Minnis Bay" – but there were discrepancies in the two brief reports, so I went over to Margate library to get the correct version. From two very brief notes, we now have nine pages of transcript, gleaned from three newspaper reports. If the brief summary below interests you, come and read the whole story in Museum.]*

On an April morning at 11 am on 7th April 1925, a Vickers Virginia bomber of No.9 Squadron, Manston, crashed into the sea, just off Beresford Gap, due to dense fog. A crowd of guests from the Beresford Hotel heard the impact as the plane hit the sea, but because of the fog, they were unable to detect how far out the plane had come down, nor had they any way of knowing what to do to help, even though the tide was fairly well out.

The manageress of the Hotel could hear shouts from the survivors and she and the other guests kept calling out that help was coming – "to keep up their spirits" – even though they themselves could do nothing. Several different forms of assistance were set in motion, but the best help had to come by a couple of rowing boats from Minnis Bay – which took time. It transpired that there were four men on board and all survived the initial crash, the pilot of the aircraft, Eric Alfred Claude Bushell, who was slightly injured and Horace Eustace Grellis was seriously injured, were eventually brought to safety. The two who died were Pilot Officer Neil Coull Walker and ACI Ernest Edward Mills aged nineteen and twenty. One of whom came from Gunnislake near Tavistock. Reading the accounts from the two parts of the inquest, it is difficult to understand exactly why the other two did not survive – even the Coroner had to make a fairly broad judgement.

Reading the various accounts, one is struck by how far forward we have moved in every sphere of 'search & rescue' and also in diagnosis into the causes of death. The outcome of such a tragedy if it occurred in 2013 would almost certainly have been quite different.

