

UNEXPLAINED CALAMITY IN HIGHLANDS

GREAT LOSS OF LIFE IN SCOTTISH VILLAGE

STORMS AND SNOW HAMPER RELIEF

A battalion of the 51st Highland Division was west of Inverness this morning surrounding the site of an as yet unexplained disaster. What seems to be the entire population of a hamlet called Cannich, at the confluence of the Rivers Glass and Cannich and twelve miles west of Drumnadrochit, have expired or are missing: more than one hundred people. The village and the surrounding area have been quarantined and the main road closed to traffic while this tragedy is being investigated.

At the same time personnel are dealing with the worst storms in living memory. Snowfall of more than three feet has fallen on this region in the last two days and winds have reached gale force for prolonged periods. The snow is drifting dangerously and an army spokesman for the divisional commander, Major-General Sir J.L.G. Burnett of Leys,

C.M.G., D.S.O., who is in personal charge of the operation, said that it may prove impossible to reach the area with additional men and supplies for some time. Indeed, personnel already on the scene may need temporary evacuation while the adverse weather conditions persist.

"We have little to go on with regard to establishing cause of death", said Lieut.-Colonel James Bell. "Fifty-two bodies have so far been recovered and the cause of death is various. Fifty people are thus far unaccounted for. No survivors have been found, and it is increasingly unlikely that any will be."

Medical examiners, including Army surgeons and staff from the Inverness and Perth Coroners Offices, have started examining the deceased. Theories being advanced at this time are possible food poisoning or contamination of the water supply, but there has been no evidence secured of either possibility.

Relatives are asked to contact the Royal Army Medical College, Grosvenor Road, telephone Westminster 5522. Those who might have visited or passed through Cannich in the last fourteen days are asked to contact the 51st Highland Division HQ in Perth, telephone Perth 4034.

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