

1881 CENSUS: RG11/1179. Folio 102. page 12.  
Address: 9 Mount-street, Ryde, IW.

Robert FRY. Head. Mar. 35. School Officer. Dorset.

Susanna FRY. Wife. Mar. 39. Dorset.

Jane FRY. Dau. 11. Scholar. Brading, IW.

William FRY. Son. 4. Scholar. Ryde, IW.

**Frederick W. TODD. Lodger. U. 24. Postal Clerk. Sheffield, Yorkshire.**

Geo, BRIGHT. Lodger. U. 21. Postal Clerk. Huntingdon.

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ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday September 9<sup>th</sup> 1882

### MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE

Early this (Friday) morning, the body of Mr. **Frederick William TODD**, who has been a clerk of the post office for several years past, was found partially covered with water, on one of the sandbanks to the west of the Pier, by Henry HOWARD and another waterman named FOWLER. The body was brought to the slipway and conveyed to the deceased's lodgings in Arthur-street. How he got into the water is at present inexplicable. He left the office the previous night about 9, in very good health and spirits, and said he should go down and hear the band on the Pier. He passed through the turnstile about a quarter past 9, and was seen with another post office employè. There was not the slightest suspicion of suicide, and the deceased was very much liked and respected by those who knew him, being the most sober and respected young man. There is a large bruise at the left side of the face, and it is supposed that he must have fallen off the steps on the pier, stunned himself, and been washed away by the sea. We understand deceased was a native of Nottingham.

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ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup> 1882

### DEATH OF A POST OFFICE CLERK THE INQUEST

On Friday evening last, the Coroner, Mr. F. BLAKE, had an inquest at the Elephant and Castle, Green-street, on the body of **Frederick William TODD**, a clerk in the Ryde Post-Office. The jury, of which Mr. MINTER, jun., was foreman, having viewed the body, the following evidence was taken :

Joseph DUTCH deposed : I am mail messenger at the Post Office. I knew deceased very well; he was employed at the Post Office as clerk. I have known him for the last five years. He has been at the Post Office all that time. Last saw him alive about a quarter past 9 last night. I was standing on the railway platform waiting for the mails, and deceased was going down. He spoke to me, and said he was going to hear the band. He said he would see me at the other end of the pier. I did not see him afterwards. I did not look for him. It was raining, and I wanted to get home. The band was playing when I came up the pier at about 25 minutes to 10. Did not observe anything peculiar about him.

Edward FAIRALL, assistant clerk at the Post Office said he had known deceased about 10 months. On the previous evening witness left the Post Office about 10 minutes past 9. Deceased was then at the office. He had just finished his work as witness came away, and asked him if he would go down the pier to hear the band.. witness replied "No," and the deceased said he should go as it was the last week it would play. He seemed in very good spirits, and was laughing and joking. There was nothing, so far as he knew, to cause deceased any trouble, and he always seemed in good spirits. Should think he was 26 or 27 years of age.

Joseph FOWLER deposed – I am a fisherman, living at Ryde. About half past 7 this morning I was on the pier getting my net into my boat. I noticed something black like a coat

showing out of the water opposite the first steps going down the pier. There was then about 1 ½ feet of water there and it was flood tide. I went to where I saw the coat and lifted it up. I thought it was a boy at first. I called Henry HEWARD, who went to the place in his boat, and we brought the body on shore. I cannot form any opinion as to how long it had been in the water. Saw nothing of a hat or cap. I saw the body a quarter of an hour before I went to it. It was drifting towards the pier from the westward. It is not at all an uncommon for people to go down the steps at the side of the pier for a necessary purpose. The steps last night would have been very slippery, especially at the bottom part. You can hardly stand on them.-

By the jury : You go down the steps to the flat, and then there is another flight. If the deceased had slipped and fallen he might have caught his eye on the lower part of the steps. Mr. FRY (a juryman with whom deceased lodged) said that the clothes of deceased were not disarranged). A juror : How high would the tide be off these particular steps at half past 9 or 10 last night ?. Witness : About three or four feet. It was high tide at 2 o'clock.

George BRIGHT, chief clerk at the Post Office, said he saw deceased the previous night. He then appeared in his usual health and spirits. Had since gone through his accounts; they were correct, and everything was entered right up. Was not aware of anything which would cause him trouble.

A juror asked what state he was in when he left the office,- the witness FAIRALL: As sober as I am now.

Mr. A. WOODWARD, M.R.C.S., said he did not know deceased, but was called in to see him that morning soon after 9 o'clock. He went to Mr. FRY'S house, in Mount-street, where deceased lodged. Saw the body there. Should think it had been dead some hours. There was an absence of the usual signs of drowning, with the exception of a slight corrugated at the ends of the fingers. There was no sand in the nails to indicate struggling in shallow water. Noticed an incised wound on the left eyelid, the appearance which indicated it had been caused during life. It was about an inch and a half in length. It gaped open, and was a deep cut, but did not wound the eye. It might have been caused by a sharp instrument, or a sharp blow from a blunt one. This might have been caused by his falling against one of the steps of the pier. There was something the matter with the ears - a slight abrasion - and they had been bleeding, but this had nothing to do with death. The first wound was sufficient to cause concussion of the brain, and he could not help thinking deceased was stunned before he got into the water, and then he drowned ?. Drowning would be the ultimate cause of death, would it not ? - Witness : Yes.

The juryman (HEWARD) suggested that the deceased might have been trying to get to his boat and fell into the water, but another juryman (FRY) said he had been part-owner of a boat but had nothing to do with it now; he had no interest in it, so there was nothing for him to go to the boat for.

The Coroner briefly summed up the points of the evidence, and said there was really no evidence before the jury to show how deceased got into the water. He might have gone down the steps, and it was possible he might have missed his footing and fallen into the water, but there was no evidence on the point.

The jury, after some little discussion, eventually returned a verdict "Found Drowned."

The funeral took place on Sunday afternoon at the Cemetery, and was very largely attended. Mr. TODD was generally liked and respected and the universal regret was shown in the number who attended. Nearly all the employes of the Post Office, (to the number of 30), and 130 members of Court Astrœa, A.O.F., followed the remains to the grave. A brother and an uncle of the deceased were the chief mourners. The burial service was most impressively read by the Rev. C. KETCHLEY, curate of All Saints.