

*DROWNING TRAGEDY – Open verdict on Ryde woman.*

The Coroner (Mr. J.V.BULLIN) recorded an open verdict at the inquest at the Town Hall Ryde, on Friday week on Miss **Gesina ORCHARD**, aged 51, of 9 Benett-street, Ryde, whose body was found on the beach opposite the Canoe Lake on Wednesday week.

George ORCHARD, retired joiner, said his daughter lived with him and his wife and was a self-employed dressmaker. At about 5.30 p.m. on November 21 she left the house to call on a Mrs. GRACE, in Park-road, and after that to go across to her aunt, who had a flat in Belvedere-street, but she never arrived there. She was all right when she left, and they expected her back quickly because she never stayed out very long.

Mr. ORCHARD said his daughter had a nervous breakdown recently and they thought she was getting over it. Once or twice she had said she would fall off the end of the pier, but they took no notice because afterwards she appeared to be all right and she had made no attempts on her life. She had no financial or other worries. She never went to Portsmouth or walked along the sea front or pier on her own.

The Coroner: I take it she had no enemies? – No sir, she had a great many friends.

Mr. ORCHARD said his daughter was very depressed at times. Both his wife and he were over 80 and she may have worried about being alone should anything happen to them. Mr ORCHARD thanked the doctor and the police.

Joseph Richard GRACE, of 1 Park-road, Ryde, said Miss ORCHARD called at about 5.30 p.m. on November 21<sup>st</sup> and left at once after leaving a parcel for a friend of his wife. She turned down the road as if towards her home.

Dr. J.GOWER said he first treated Miss ORCHARD on October 6<sup>th</sup> when she was suffering from a depressive illness. He saw her several times and on each occasion he was impressed by her response to treatment. He was surprised to hear she had been found dead.

Dr. P.D.SWINSTEAD (pathologist) said he made a post mortem examination on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Death was due to drowning, and she had been dead at least 12 to 15 hours when he first saw the body at 10 a.m. the previous day. She had not suffered a seizure or heart attack.

John Charles REASON, of the Briary, St Michael's-road, St. Helens, a corporation employee, said he saw what appeared to be a pile of clothes when he looked over the sea wall between Appley Wall and the groyne to the westward at 8.45 a.m. on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

P.C. K.E.TAYLOR said he recovered the body with the assistance of council workmen. He found nothing to indicate how Miss ORCHARD had entered the water. He had been unable to find anyone who had seen Miss ORCHARD after she left the home of Mr. and Mrs. GRACE.

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