

BIRTH: c1861 Ryde (IW Registrars ref: R20/P54)
Richard HEWARD (mother's maiden name = HIBBS).

1871 CENSUS: RG10/1165. folio 33. page 17.
Address: 87 Arthur-street, Ryde, IW.

Thomas HEWARD. Head. Mar. 37. Pilot. Ryde, IW.
Matilda HEWARD. Wife. Mar. 38. Laundress. Lulworth, Dorset.
Agnes HIBBS. Dau. Unm. 20. Laundress. Ryde, IW.
Elizabeth HEWARD. Dau. 11. Scholar. Ryde, IW.
Richard HEWARD. Son. 9. Scholar. Ryde, IW.
Matilda HEWARD. Dau. 7. Scholar. Ryde, IW.

ISLE OF WIGHT Times Thursday 5 August 1875

HEWARD INQUEST DROWNED WHILST BATHING

An inquest was held by Mr. F. BLAKE, and a jury (of which Mr. J.G.H.CAWS was foreman), at the Gem Inn, Hill Street, on Friday morning, on the body of **Richard HEWARD**, aged 14 years, (a son of Thomas HEWARD, waterman, of Arthur Street), who was drowned whilst bathing from off the public bathing stage on Esplanade, Ryde, on Wednesday evening, he most probably having been seized with a fit whilst in the water. The poor lad was in the habit of bathing, and was an excellent swimmer.

Richard COOPER, Dover Street, mariner, deposed that he was appointed bathing master by the Corporation. Deceased came there to bathe on Wednesday evening; he did not recollect having seen him there before. He came with a friend; a young man, and he supplied both with bathing drawers. Deceased went down the steps, and jumped into the water. He swam very well. Saw him swimming in deep water, in a sort of match with other boys, not long before he was taken out. There was 3ft 6inch of water, where he was taken out. Shortly after the race, deceased, like others did, held by one of the posts there, and was jumping up and down: he had been in the water over half an hour then. Other bathers were all around him. He (witness) went to the stage to call two men who were beyond the boundary, and, two or three minutes after he had seen deceased at the post, a man called out that someone was under water. Deceased was taken out at once, and he (witness) received him on the steps, when the proper restoratives - the means recommended by the Humane Society were at once applied. Did not think deceased was under water a minute. Thought he was dead directly he was brought up, not seeing any sign of moving or breathing. There was nothing either with respect to the water or shore at all dangerous for bathing. Yes, half an hour was a long time to stay in the water, but boys often did. If he could pick out boys who had been in too long he called them out. Deceased did not appear to be in distress when round the post.

By the father: I didn't see him having any manoeuvres in the water. You couldn't watch everyone at the same time. Should think there were 30 in at once. The posts were the boundaries of the bathing place - bathers must not go beyond on either side; one of the posts also shows depth of water.

By the Foreman: He had no regulations as to the number bathing at once. One might be missed without his knowing it. Let him turn his back, and the boys would be in in a minute.

By the Jurors: We have only a lifebuoy there - no boat. We sent for medical aid immediately.

By the Father: Just before he was picked up, he was playing with the others, he did not appear to be in distress; his head was not under water. The father: I hear yarns that he was seen with his head under water for several minutes. Those in the water would be thinking of something else, but a bathing master should look after them.

Witness: I was calling someone back who were 150 yards off nearing the ladies bathing place, which is not allowed.

The Father: Three minutes seems a short time for the boy to die in. - The Coroner also thought there must be some mistake as to its being only three minutes. - A Juror asked if deceased bathed on a full stomach. - The father replied deceased had a little oxtail soup and fish for dinner, and bread and butter for tea, about two hours before. He bought a penny doughnut at Mrs BOYCE's in Pier Street, afterwards. - Thomas HEWARD, the father, then gave evidence, deposing that deceased frequently bathed from a boat, and could swim. He left him (witness) on the evening in question near the pier in the little boat to row towards the shore with another little boy. He told them to make haste back, as perhaps he should want them to row about in the cool of the evening. He forbade deceased to bathe two or three times that day, as it was so very hot. He told him to take a chamois leather and a bucket of water and wash, and he did so on the vessel. In colder weather he never forbade him, but let him bathe from the boat in shallow water.

John WEARN said he saw deceased going along the Esplanade, when he looked almost roasted - so hot. Deceased was in good health and spirits on the day in question, better than he had ever seen him. He had been bad a fortnight before. Asked whether he was subject to fits, the father replied that he used to sleep very sound, and was sometimes a little dull for a time on waking up - never in the day time. When he had convulsions they took him to the Infirmary - that was about two months ago, but they said he would be better out than in. He had medicine for a month afterwards. After they got him round in the morning deceased didn't know anything about the state he had been in. They asked him how he felt, but he replied that he didn't know anything was the matter.

By Mr GOULD, a Juror: His face would be a little darker then, and he would be a little puffy about the lips.

By the Coroner: On the day in question deceased was under the pier, in the shade, catching smelts. He was a wonderfully strong boy - nearly as strong as a man.

By the Foreman: Thought the last fit he had was when he woke last Saturday morning. When he had the fits, his features altered, his mouth was screwed round, and his eyes rolled; but when he was brought home there were no such appearances; he looked like drowned persons (he had seen several) did: he might have had the cramp:

John SAVAGE, a young man, a plumber, Prince Street, deposed that he was bathing on the day in question. Someone called out that there was a lad under water. He was swimming inwards, and then swam to the spot indicated by someone in the water, saying "there's a lad down here", or words to that effect. Saw the body lying quite still at the bottom, in about 4ft of water. Took him by the leg, then got him under the arm, and carried him to the stage. He appeared to be dead then. Everything that could possibly be done was done immediately, but without any effect. Had deceased to the stage in less than a minute. Two bathers were not far from where deceased lay. No-one told him they had seen deceased go down. No-one seemed to know anything about him.

By the Foreman: Deceased was four or five yards from the post, he would not be out of his depth.

By Mr GOULD: He seemed to be lying naturally, on his side. The hailing came from the shore and then someone in the water said "There's a chap down here." The right hand was curved; not clenched.

The Father, by a juror: In fits in the morning his hands were clenched.

Witness, by the coroner: He could not have been long in the water.

By the father: Did not see him "cutting any capers" in the water. He undressed beside me and I had not been in the water more than ten minutes. - The Coroner said he thought COOPER was not quite correct as to his times.

Mr A PLATT WILKS, M.B, and surgeon, deposed that, being sent for, he went to the bathing stage immediately, arriving in ten or fifteen minutes after receiving notice. He found deceased laid on the bench, on the stage, and, to all appearances, dead. He understood that the usual means for artificial respiration had been adopted, but, although without hope, he considered it advisable to continue those means for some time; and they were continued, but without effect. His opinion was based, not on the appearance of the body, but on what was told him. The appearance to the body was compatible with drowning. Recovery has been known after 14 minutes immersion in the water, with healthy subjects. there was nothing peculiar in the features of the deceased that would indicate a fit. From the evidence, and without making a post-mortem examination, his opinion was that there might have been some heart disease, or some form of epilepsy - that he was seized in the water from one of those two causes, was submersed and died instantaneously - that he was drowned, but that drowning was caused by a fit or heart disease.

By Mr GOULD: In such case a man would die directly: he would not be able to recover. The slightest immersion in the water would be sufficient to cause death by drowning in such cases. He was led to that opinion from the fact that deceased did not seem to have given any alarm or to have cried out, which was generally the case when seized with cramp.

The Foreman: Would bathing be likely to bring on fits in the case of a person subject to them?

Witness: Yes. There would be the risk of it coming on; and the shock of bathing would be more likely to bring it on: it would be doubly dangerous.

Sgt HOLLOWAY said the soldier who saw deceased go under and called out, and whom he had supposed, was not even now in attendance. He had searched, but could not find him, although he was seen in town in the morning.

The Coroner said the evidence of Mr WILKS threw light on what was formerly obscure. - The foreman thought it would be strange if deceased called out and was not heard by those bathing near him.

Mr WILKS said COOPER deposed that deceased was not under water more than three minutes. A person sinking in the ordinary way, and if the time were five instead of three minutes, could be brought round. Considering the number bathing there, he didn't think any length of time could have elapsed. The gunner, he was informed, had been a teacher of swimming at Brighton, and so was thoroughly up as to what was necessary to be done.

The Coroner said an alarm must have been given by someone who saw him sink, and the only thing they had not got was the evidence of the man who actually saw him sink. -

Sgt. HOLLOWAY said he understood that the soldier was looking over the wall, and his attention was arrested by deceased's playing and diving. He saw him go down head first and afterwards called out "There's a man under water - been under longer than he ought to have been. The man promised to come, and said there was no necessity for his going to the authorities at Puckpool. -

The Coroner said it was for the jury to say whether they were satisfied or whether they would adjourn for the soldier's attendances; he hardly thought it necessary. -

Mr GOULD thought the father should say whether he was satisfied. -

Mr HEWARD said he had no reason to go against Mr WILKS statements and did not see that any good could be done.

Mr GOULD here made a statement to the effect that a man named FLUX said he went to another surgeon (mentioning the name) before he went to Mr WILKS and that the man replied that he was going to have his tea and could not come, Mr. FLUX said he was prepared to substantiate that. On one or two occasions he (Mr. GOULD) had himself had a necessity to go for a medical man and had the greatest difficulty getting them.

The Foreman said that several jurors thought that the Corporation ought to have a boat at the bathing stage, only good swimmers could save a man in distress at that distance from the stage -

Mr. WILKS said a double risk would be run, for a drowning man might overpower a good swimmer -

The Coroner thought a boat would be a very proper part of the arrangement.

The jury returned a verdict that deceased was seized with sudden illness whilst bathing and was accidentally drowned. They also requested the Coroner to request the Corporation to have a boat there. They further expressed their opinion that no blame be attributed to COOPER.

Researched & typed by
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