

MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF A YOUNG LADY FOUND DROWNED ON THE SHORE

On Saturday morning considerable sensation was occasioned in the town by the discovery, in the early morning, of the body of a young lady on the shore, but it was not till nearly mid day that it was identified as that of Miss HURLOCK, daughter of a naval officer, Lieut. HURLOCK, of Victoria Terrace. A melancholy feature in the case is that another daughter of the same gentleman committed suicide about two years ago by jumping from a window in the upper part of the house, in Victoria Terrace. The body was removed to the Mortuary, and the Deputy Coroner, Mr E. F. BLAKE, held an inquest on Saturday evening at the Gem Inn, Hill Street. Mr Fred W. MORRANT was foreman of the jury. The first witness was

Robert RAYNER, of Pier Street, a fisherman. He found the body that morning, about a quarter past four o'clock, when on the shore. He did not know deceased and, seeing she was quite dead, he went for the police.

Robert George HURLOCK, of 5, Victoria Terrace, a retired naval officer, deposed that deceased was his daughter and lived with him. She was 34 years of age. He last saw her alive at half-past 5 o'clock the previous night. She was at home then, and did not go out till half-past 6 o'clock. She washed herself, and put on her best dress to go for a walk. He went to the Club and had a game of chess, and when he got back from that deceased had not returned, but he did not think much of it, as on two previous occasions she had gone to Southsea and missed the boat, and he did not think to make any enquiries till twelve o'clock that day.

The Coroner. —What was the state of her mind.

Witness believed she was perfectly sane. He had no idea of her committing suicide — it never entered his head. She had no trouble except that when his other daughter died about two years ago, and it was brought in a case of suicide, it was a great shock to deceased. The Coroner would perhaps remember that she found the body. She had not, however, referred to it for a long time, and she was not despondent. She was going away for her holidays to London, and had prepared all her clothes to do so. Her favourite walk was along Spencer Road for Fishbourne, and back to Ryde by the shore, and he had asked her not to do so, as you could not get off the beach at certain times. He believed she was walking along the beach home and the tide overtook her and, being near-sighted, she probably could not find her way out of the difficulty — that was his opinion.

The Foreman. — Did she seem in her usual spirits on Friday? — No, I can't say she did.

Was it usual for thundery weather, such as we had had, to affect her? — She was quiet, and I said to her "You are not looking very well to night, you had better take a walk."

Did she leave any written communication? — No, nothing at all; she never did. RAYNER was here recalled, and was asked if, where he found the body, there was any place where deceased could have got off the shore. — RAYNER: Not without going back to Binstead Brook.

How far would she have to walk? —Half a mile.

And no way to get on shore? — Not without going on private property.

How far was she out where you found her? — About 15ft from the sea wall under Copsefield, Mr RATCLIFFE's place, and about 15 yards from the end of Pelham Fields walk.

The Foreman. — About what time was it high water? — About twenty minutes to 11.

Supposing she had been walking there about half-past nine or ten?— It would not be possible for her to get round; she could have done so about eight o'clock, three hours before high water, or three hours after. It would be dangerous for her to attempt to get back after 8 o'clock.

The Coroner.—From where you found her, how far would it be to any place giving her access on to land? — She could not get to land; there is a wall.

But isn't there some high part? — Yes, within 50 yards.

A Juror.—You know that at the foot of Clifford's wall there's another low wall? — The top of the sewer, yes.

Is it not in a very slippery condition? —Yes, the further end of it.

So that a person might fall off it and get stunned?—They might.

The Coroner.—Where would that be? — About : 200 yards from where she was found.

Dr. WOODWARD was then called, and deposed that he knew deceased quite well, but had not seen her lately. He had attended her. He had seen the body that morning at the Mortuary and made an examination. He was satisfied that deceased died from drowning.

Did you attend her in illness?— Yes.

Had you an opportunity of judging whether she was depressed? —Yes, after the unfortunate occurrence of her sister's death, I was consulted as to deceased's state of health. I found she was a little bit off her balance.

Mentally? — Yes, she was certainly a little bit strange in her manner, and I told her friends so, and advised them to send her away under proper care and control. She was sent away, and was under the care and control of a medical man for six months.

Did you see her when she came back? — I am not sure about that. She was sent to a private establishment kept by a medical man.

From what you saw of her, did you think it safe for her to be at liberty, or did you think she ought to be under control? — I think she wanted to be taken care of. That was from my own observation, and because I knew her perfectly well.

You saw the abrasions on her face; did you think that would be caused by a fall? —No, I think it was caused by the sea washing her to and fro on the shingle.

You saw nothing to indicate any violence — Oh, dear no.

The Coroner having summed up, many of the jury expressed the opinion that the death was accidental, one juryman stating that at the stage just past the copse, the shore was very treacherous, and it would be extremely easy for anyone to get drowned there. Eventually a verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

At the conclusion of the inquest the foreman and jury asked the coroner to convey to Mr HURLOCK their very sincere sympathy with him and his family in their melancholy bereavement.
