

**FISHBOURNE MAN'S DEATH REMAINS A MYSTERY  
OPEN VERDICT AT RYDE INQUEST**

How a Fishbourne man, whose body was found floating near the entrance to Wootton Creek on Saturday morning, came to meet his death, remained a mystery after an inquest at Ryde on Tuesday afternoon.

The man was **Alfred TOWNSEND**, a 55-year-old council gardener, of "Laurel Cottage," Fishbourne Lane, upon whose death an open verdict was recorded by the Island Coroner, Mr. J.V. BULLIN.

**Devoted Couple**

Mr. Stanley WAGLEY, a bus driver of Haven Cottage, Fishbourne, said he was the next door neighbour of the deceased. He gave evidence of identification, and added that the deceased and his wife were a devoted couple. Mr. TOWNSEND would not resort to suicide.

Dr. P.D. SWINSTEAD, the Island pathologist, said the cause of death was drowning. A post mortem examination also revealed a diseased kidney. Deceased had been X-rayed by the hospital who had requested him to go in for an examination which would have involved an anaesthetic. It was only a minor defect which the hospital wished to investigate.

**A Note**

Dr. SWINSTEAD produced a note written by Mrs. TOWNSEND to the hospital on behalf of her husband saying: "Please cancel my bed."

Mrs. Florence Mildred TOWNSEND, wife of the deceased said they made their married home at Fishbourne in 1944. In June 1945 her husband commenced work as a gardener for Ryde Borough Council. His health was good, but in March he injured himself at work and was under the doctor for several weeks. He eventually had an X-ray and Mr. A.C. LIECHING, the surgeon, wanted him to go for a later examination as the X-ray revealed kidney trouble of some sort. He had not gone back to hospital because he felt so well, but he had worried about his complaint.

**"A Cheerful Chap"**

"He was a very cheerful chap" said Mrs. TOWNSEND. "He never threatened to take his life and said he was going to pick some apples on Sunday."

He had not been sleeping well, and at about 5.30 on Saturday morning he got up. He seemed normal then.

"I must have dozed off and woke up again at about seven. I rushed down to say goodbye before he went to work, but he was gone."

Mr. S.E.G. KEEFE, of 10 Ratcliffe Avenue, Ryde, a borough gardener, said he had known the deceased since 1945. He was a like-able man and cheerful, but after his illness this year he became very quiet and seemed to be worrying inwardly.

**No Suicide Threat**

Coroner: "Did he ever suggest that he might take his life?"

Witness: "No. I should think it was the last thing he would have done."

Deceased returned to work from a holiday on October 15, and on that day, a Monday, seemed much brighter, but the following day became very quiet again.

At the end of the week on Friday night he seemed cheerful and said goodnight to everyone before going home. He did not return on Saturday morning.

Mr. Francis John YOUNG, a boatman of "Roselle," Fishbourne, said he knew the deceased and last saw him alive at 5.30 on Friday evening walking along the road at Fishbourne, presumably going home. Deceased was a cheerful man. He was not a boating man and witness rarely saw him on the beach.

**Saw Body Floating**

At 10.15 on Saturday morning, while working at Wootton Creek he saw the body of a man floating face downwards 50 yards offshore at the mouth of the creek. He went by boat and brought the body ashore. It was fully clothed and a false teeth plate was in the right hand. He did not recognise the body at that time, which was about two hours before high tide.

Answering the Coroner, Mr. YOUNG said that none of his friends in the creek area had seen Mr. TOWNSEND on the beach that morning.

Inspector D.R. PADWICK added that police enquiries in this direction had revealed nothing either.

**Coroner's Tribute**

Recording his verdict, the Coroner expressed his sympathy with the relatives and thanked Mr. YOUNG for his help, adding: "It is nice to know there are people who do their best so promptly and readily."

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