

**RYDE MYSTERY SOLVED.**

MISSING YOUTH'S BODY RECOVERED  
FROM THE SEA.

The mystery surrounding the disappearance of **Kenneth PARKER**, aged 18, who left his home at 11 Hill-street, Ryde, on the evening of June 21<sup>st</sup>, and part of whose clothing was found on the pier that same night, was cleared up on Monday when his body was taken from the sea at the Pier-head.

The Acting Deputy Coroner (W. H. P. F. THIRKELL, Esq) conducted the inquest at the Primitive Methodist-school on Tuesday, P.S. PALMER was present to represent the police.

Alice Emily PARKER, a widow, of 11 Hill-street, said deceased was her son and was 18 years of age. Since he was three years of age he had suffered from bad health and had been subject to fits since he was 10. He was always feeble-minded and never seemed to grow up mentally. On Tuesday June 21<sup>st</sup> witness returned home at about 5.30 after about an hour and a half's absence, and found her little girl, aged 10, in tears because her brother had struck her. She told him that she did not hit the child and that he was not going to. He took offence at this and said "I shall ---- well clear out." He had often said the same thing before, so that she took very little notice of it. He did not wait to have his tea but left the house at once. She prepared his tea in case he came back. At 8.50 the same evening witness saw Kenneth sitting on a seat in St. Thomas's-square. She went to him but he did not speak to her, although he accepted two-pence from her which she usually gave him to buy chips. She herself went to the pictures and arrived home at 10.50 and found that deceased had returned, made himself a cup of tea, and eaten some chips. Before leaving the house again he told his sister to inform witness not to lock the door as he might not be in. She went to search for deceased and was informed by a Mr. SPENCER that Kenneth had told him he was going along the shore to meet his mate, and that if he was not there he would catch Mr. SPENCER up again as both lived "up the street." She did not know who her son's mate was. Near the pier she met P.C. HODGES, who knew her son, and she asked if he had seen him. She went to the Pier-gates to inquire if he had been found on the sands in a fit, and was told that some of his clothing had been found at the Pier-head. Her son was certified as an epileptic, and the attacks occurred about every six weeks, the last one being about a month ago. On such occasions when she upbraided him he never threatened to kill himself, and she thought he would be too nervous to do such a thing. He had asked her many times if he could go fishing on the pier, but she refused to allow him. She had also refused him permission to bathe. When he felt a fit coming on he always partly undressed. Her son always played with children.

Samuel BARTON, of Oaklands, Binstead, a ganger in the employ of Messrs. JACKAMAN and Sons, of Slough, who are engaged in reconstructional work on the pier, deposed that at 10.10 on June 21<sup>st</sup> he was working by the light of an acetylene flare on the lower pile supports at the west side of the Pier-head, and saw a man in the water. He could see he had some clothing on and as he was floating with his hands clasped behind his head he thought he was a bather. There was nothing to suggest that the person was in difficulties but witness walked to the edge of the pier, and by that time the tide had carried the body past him. He could still see it and as the body remained in the same position he became suspicious and called a porter to come and look. The porter did not come so he spoke to a man who was fishing and on looking again he saw the body sink. He at once telephoned to the police and later on searching, found part of deceased's clothing, consisting of collar and

tie, jacket and shoes, on the steps leading down to the water. The fisherman tried to recover the body with his rod and line. Witness added that he could swim and had he thought the person was in difficulties he should have gone to his assistance.

Alfred MATCHAM, a cabinet-maker and joiner, of 11 Waverley-road, Freemantle, Southampton, said that on the previous day he was fishing from the eastern end of the pier, and at 12.20p.m. he saw a body in the water. He called to the captain of an outward-bound steamer, who apparently did not understand. He then informed Head-porter SHOEBRIDGE and a boat was launched from the Southern Railway steamer Shanklin and the body was taken from the water.

P.C. T. HODGES stated that he knew the deceased very well and that he often bathed off the George-street slipway and could swim. On several occasions he had attended him in epileptic fits, the last being about a month ago on the western esplanade after he had been playing football. On no occasion had he seen deceased undress himself as the fits were so sudden. At such times witness had to cut his necktie to release it because it was tied so tightly. At 12.40p.m. on the previous day he received a telephone message from Head-porter SHOEBRIDGE that a body was being recovered from the water, and asking that the police ambulance should be sent. With P.C. THATCHER he went to the Pier-head and took charge of the body, which was removed in the ambulance to the mortuary. Deceased was wearing socks, trousers, waistcoat, jersey, and shirt. He found nothing on the clothing which deceased was wearing or in the clothing which he left on the pier. The officer added that he had made inquiry at the Pier-gates, but deceased was not seen to go on the pier. It was low tide at the time, and anyone could get on the pier by the steps on the western side.

The coroner said he though deceased was alive when Mr. BARTON first saw him. Probably he had been running after his mate and got hot and went on the pier to have a bathe. He thought he had a fit in the water and was drowned in consequence. He did not think there was anything to suggest that he did away with himself as his mother had told them that after the little tiffs at home he would stop out an hour or two and then come back. Possibly in having a bathe he did not want to take off more clothes than he did. The Coroner recollected that many years ago, when he was a member of one of the clubs, they would often go for a swim in their vests and pants. It was not without doubt that he recorded a verdict of death following a fit whilst bathing in the water.

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