

**YOUNG MAN'S SUICIDE
DECAPITATED ON THE RAILWAY**

On Thursday morning, the Isle of Wight Coroner (Mr. F.A. JOYCE) held an inquest at Smallbrooke Farm near Ryde, on the body of **Percy Frank ROACH**, aged 20, whose body was found on the I.W. Railway at Smallbrooke Arch, on Tuesday morning. Mr. Alfred COOK was chosen foreman of the jury. Inspector HAWKINS of the County Police, Chief-Constable GREENSTREET, of Ryde Borough Police, and Inspector BUCKETT, of the I.W. Railway Co. were in attendance.

Leonard Henry ROACH, painter and decorator, of 3, Surrey-street, Ryde, identified the body as that of his son, who lived with him and was 20 years of age in May last. Deceased was a painter's labourer, who had only worked with him during the summer at Mr. OSBOURNE'S, Union-street, Ryde. He last saw deceased early on Monday afternoon when he was sitting in the garden in his shirt sleeves. Witness asked him what he was going to do and he said he was going to do a little bit of gardening perhaps presently. When witness returned home from work in the evening, deceased had left. Deceased usually returned home from 10.15 to 10.30, but he had not returned when they went to bed. Deceased was down at the Territorial Orderly Room most nights and they did not wait up for him. Witness did not know until next morning when he got downstairs and saw the lamp still burning on the table that deceased had not returned home. He went upstairs and looked into deceased's bedroom and found that he was not there. He went to work and when he returned to breakfast he found a neighbour reading to his wife a letter, which his wife had just received by post from deceased. The letter, which was a black edged envelope, read as follows:

.....Dear Mother, just a few lines, the last I shall ever write as I have intended to commit suicide by putting myself under the train at Smallbrooke Arch, I know it will break your heart, but I could not help it. I am doing it not because I am insane, but because I am tired of life. Get my Territorial clothes ready as I have asked Henry ATTRILL to take them back for me. Give my love to all the family. Good-bye and God help you. I remain your truly son, Percy." Witness read the letter and went down to the St. John's Railway Station, Ryde, and asked if they had found a body on the line and the Station Master said "Yes."

By the Coroner: He had no reason to suppose that his son was going to commit suicide – the last week he had not been the same indoors. he always appeared to be alright so far. He had not said anything. He did not know of any cause for deceased's act. There had been no unpleasantness at home. Since he had been out of work he always came home to meals and his mother and witness gave him some coppers when he wanted some cigarettes or tobacco to smoke. He did not think that the deceased had anything preying on his mind. He went to Osborne Naval college last week to try and get a job of painting and the foreman told him as he was a painter's labourer and not a painter.

The Coroner said it could not have been a sudden impulse as he wrote the letter overnight.

By the Coroner;

Witness said deceased gave no hint for anything going wrong, he had no quarrel at home.

By Inspector HAWKINS, He had heard of no trouble between deceased and any young lady.

When deceased was at work at HARRISON'S, the chaps used to chaff him about having a girl, but he used to tell them to shut up and mind their own business. There was a recreation room in connection with the Territorials and that is where deceased spent most of his evenings.

Henry ATTRILL, employed as a fitter and trimmer at the I.W. Railway Works, of Hope Villa, Trinity-street, Ryde, said deceased was a friend of his. He last saw deceased at 8.10 p.m on Monday night at the Territorial Club Room. He was talking for some time to deceased, who was unusually quiet that evening. Deceased left the Club Room about 8.10 p.m. and witness walked a little way up the road with deceased who then walked away saying "So long." By the first post next morning he received the following letter from deceased :- 3, Surrey-street, Ryde, I.W. Dear Henry, just a few lines to ask you to be so kind enough to take back my Territorial clothes and bugle. I have intended to end it all as I am quite tired of life. Remember me to Dennie and all the boys down the Orderly Room. I don't think I have any more to say, I will now close I remain your truly friend, Birdie. P.S.- Keep the picture a keep sake "Nearer my god to Thee."

Acting P.S. SHANNON, said the little drawing was a picture of the Titanic.

By the jury ; He saw deceased every night, he knew of nothing on deceased's mind; if he had been in trouble he would have told deceased. He had never given any hint he might commit suicide.

By Inspector HAWKINS, witness did not know that deceased had been subject to any chaff. He had never complained about his home, he had always got on very well at home.

Henry PHILLIPS, Foreman platelayer, in the employ of the I.W. Railway Co., living at Rosemary Cottage, Ashley Road, Ryde, said that about 6.10 on Tuesday morning he was walking on the railway at Smallbrook Bridge when he saw the deceased's body lying across the I.W. Railway at the bridge. The head that was severed from the body, was lying inside the four foot way and his body was lying on the other side of the rail straight across, and his feet were touching the wall of the bridge. From the position of the body witness should say the deceased had deliberately laid down with his neck on the rail with the intent of being destroyed by a passing train. The last passenger train passed the spot on Monday night was about 10 o'clock. There was a goods train each way afterwards.

By the jury ; The head was lying just inside the rail just as it had dropped after being cut off.

Percy George HENLEY, of Hillside, Abingdon-road, Ryde, a fitter in the employ of the I.W. Railway said that he examined in the running shed the engine "Shanklin," next morning and found a small piece of flesh and blood matter together with the lower side of the brake shaft; which he believed must have struck deceased's neck and severed the head. He didn't think the wheel touched it.

Walter LOADER, of Quarry-road, Ryde, engine driver, in the employ of the I.W. Railway Co., said on the night in question he was the driver of the train which left Ventnor for Ryde at 9.30 p.m., the engine being the "Shanklin." Witness felt no shock nor saw anything unusual as the engine passed Smallbrooke.

The Coroner said no doubt deceased for some hidden reason had with great premeditation destroyed himself. In his letter deceased said he was not insane but this statement was frequently made by persons who intended to commit suicide. It was for the jury to say whether they would add "During temporary insanity" to their verdict of suicide. If they did not there might be some trouble as to altering the burial service and they did not wish to wound the relatives' feelings.

The jury returned a verdict of "suicide whilst temporarily insane" and expressed their sympathy with the parents and other relatives.
