

BATHING FATALITY AT RYDE.

A MIDNIGHT AND DAYBREAK SCENE.

The intensity of the hot weather recently experienced has made an almost irresistible appeal to bathers to take to the water at all hours of the day, but one of the most popular periods, probably because of the novelty it affords, is the evening and night. It has been no uncommon sight to see crowds of bathers enjoying immersion in the sea off the Esplanade at Ryde each evening, and even late into the night devotees of this art may be seen disporting themselves. Unhappily, when the habit was becoming increasingly popular a tragic mishap occurred to mar its continuance. A local youth, **Alfred NEW**, aged 19, of 47a George-street, went to bathe with a chum on Monday night, and a few minutes after he had entered the water on the eastern side of the pier near the old horse slipway he got into difficulties. His cry for help was heard by his companion, Roy Lawrence **MOORE**, of 45 Argyll-street, and others, but it was almost midnight, and the darkness was responsible for a tragedy which might otherwise have been avoided, for the would-be rescuers, and especially **MOORE**, who acted in a gallant manner, were unable to locate the drowning youth. Another poignant circumstance associated with the sad occurrence was the fact that deceased's father, on hearing that his son was missing, kept vigil on the shore until daybreak, when the body was disclosed by the receding tide at a spot not far from the shore. Young **NEW** was just finishing his apprenticeship as a bricklayer, and was one whose cheerful disposition made him a great favourite among his fellows. The sad happening caused profound sympathy with the parents.

A verdict of death from accidental drowning was returned by the Deputy Coroner (F.A. **JOYCE**, Esq.) at the inquest on Tuesday held in the Primitive Methodist-school. The deceased's father, Frederick John **NEW**, said he last saw his son at about 11 p.m. on Monday, when he came home and changed his clothes for a bathing costume. He was afterwards informed that his son could not be found, so he informed the police and went to the shore. He waited until daybreak, when he found his boy lying dead on the sand below high-water mark, at about the spot where he was supposed to have bathed, 100 yards from the shore. His son had told him he could swim. He did not think he was a very strong swimmer. He was not liable to fits, but he once had cramp.

Roy Lawrence **MOORE**, an electrician, of 45 Argyll-street, stated that he was with deceased the whole of Monday evening. At 11.10 p.m. witness went to **NEW**'s house and waited whilst he changed his clothes for a bathing costume and an overcoat. They proceeded to the public bathing stage on the Eastern esplanade and deceased went into the water whilst witness was undressing. He plunged off the steps of the stage. A few minutes afterwards witness heard deceased shout "Roy" and he came to the conclusion that he was in difficulties. He heard another shout as he dived in and swam in the direction of the sound, which seemed about 30 yards out. He had previously shouted to **GUTTRIDGE**, who was on the stage when they arrived there, to get out a boat. He heard no more cries, and it was impossible to see anything of his companion. He dived several times in his efforts to find him, but they were fruitless, so after a time he gave up hope. He informed the police and went with P.S. **PALMER** in a boat to try to find **NEW**, but without success. This was the first time he had bathed with the lad. He understood that he could swim.

Reginald W. **GUTTRIDGE**, cycle mechanic, of 3 Park-road, Ryde, deposed that late on Monday evening he had a bathe with three other youths, and they were on the stage when **NEW** and **MOORE** came there. He saw the deceased take of his overcoat and jump off the steps into the water. **MOORE** followed him shortly afterwards and dived off. Deceased was only in the water two minutes when witness heard him shout from a spot 25 to 30 yards away. He shouted twice and then came a gurgling noise and silence. Deceased must have taken a very short time to sink after he first got into difficulties. Witness got a boat as quickly as he could, on the advice of **MOORE**, and rowed to the spot from which the cries came, but could see nothing in the darkness. He believed that **NEW** could swim, but he had never seen him do so.

Frederick **BARTLETT**, a porter employed at the Pier-head railway-station, living at 24 Alfred-street, Ryde, stated that he heard about the fatality and at half past four the same morning went to the vicinity, and on the sands he saw the body of **NEW** as it had been left by the tide. It was dressed in a bathing costume. The hands were clasped together. It was lying between the bathing stage and the horse slipway. P.C. W. **BAKER** said he found the body on the beach as described by **BARTLETT**.

Dr. L.P. FIRMAN-EDWARDS stated that the body clearly showed that death was caused by drowning. There were slight abrasions on the shoulders and the back of the head, but not enough to cause unconsciousness. He attached no importance to them.

The Coroner stated that there was no difficulty in arriving the conclusion that the boy was accidentally drowned. From the short time between the first cries and the end it would appear that cramp must have seized the swimmer. Had he merely lost strength he would not have sunk so soon. There was no one in the least to be blamed, for his acquaintances seemed to have done all that they could in the difficult circumstances. He very much sympathised with Mr. MEW in his sad loss.

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