

**BOAT TRAGEDY
ANOTHER SUPPOSED SUICIDE.**

Another tragic event occurred on a steamboat crossing from Portsmouth to Ryde, mid-day on Sunday when a man disappeared from the deck of the "Duchess of Norfolk" into the Solent when about a mile from Ryde Pier. This is the second occurrence of a similar nature within a month and third within a year. Two ladies who saw the man jump over-board stated that his coat flew open and held him afloat. Capt. LEMMOND brought the vessel to, one of the life-boats was lowered and the man was brought on board within five minutes of his entering the water. Artificial respiration was attempted but without success and when the body was taken off at Ryde Pier Dr. CHURCHILL who had been summoned pronounced life extinct. The officials were unable to find any ticket on the body but a large quantity of beach shingle was found in the man's pockets. The remains were conveyed to the Mortuary and the body was subsequently identified as that of **George FIELDS**, of 39, Arundel Street, Portsmouth, who carried on two shops in that street.

The Inquest

The Coroner (Mr F. A. JOYCE) held an inquest into the circumstances of the case at the Primitive Methodist schoolroom, High-street, on Tuesday afternoon. The wife of the deceased who is suffering from neurasthenia was unable to attend the inquiry.

Walter Edward James SAWYER, butcher, 176 Arundel-street, Portsmouth, identified the body and said he managed the butchers business for deceased at that address but Mr. FIELDS carried on a trade as confectioner and tobacconist at 39 Arundel-street. Deceased was in the habit of coming to witness's address each day but the shop was only recently opened. He could not form any idea why his employer should take his life as the business was doing fairly well and he had no troubles financial or otherwise. He and his wife were the happiest couple he had seen in his life. Witness last saw him alive at 11.30 on Saturday night and everything was then in order as the books would show. Deceased was attended by a doctor for heart trouble about two months ago.

Miss Ada Nellie DRUDGE, boarding-house keeper, of 42 Clarence Parade, Southsea, stated she and her sister were passengers by the 12.35 mid-day boat on Sunday to Ryde. When about ten minutes from the Pier she saw deceased come up from the lower deck to the top deck where she was standing about the centre of the boat. He walked towards the stern and back again, and then hesitated for a few moments and walked to the stern again. A minute or two afterwards her sister directed her attention to him exclaiming "Look at that man," and they saw him climb the rails and then drop. His overcoat opened as he went into the sea. She was about 20ft. from him at that time and she at once shouted, when the boat was stopped and the man was soon picked up. She had previously noticed deceased's face had a "bluey-white" appearance and her sister remarked that he looked strange.

The first witness in reply to further questions from the Coroner said that deceased liked a little drink and he sometimes had more than he should but never in the morning only at night time.

Miss DRUDGE said she did not think he was under the influence of drink when she saw him on the boat.

Alfred Edward LEMMOND, captain of the "Duchess of Norfolk" passenger steamer belonging to the Southern Railway Co., said on the day in question he was taking the vessel from Portsmouth to Ryde leaving the Harbour at 12.25 and arriving at Southsea at 12.35. When near the Bell Buoy, about a mile from Ryde Pier he heard a lady shout "Man Overboard." He looked round, reversed the engines and ordered a boat to be lowered. Within five minutes the body was recovered and artificial respiration was resorted to but without success. He did not sink

The Coroner remarked that 7 lbs. of shingle was found in deceased's pockets and it was suggested he died from shock and not drowning.

Miss DRUDGE told the Coroner that they watched the man the whole time he was in the water and he did not go under. He struck out for a time.

P.S. PALMER said that on Sunday in consequence of a telephone message he went to the Pier Head and saw the body of deceased in charge of Dr. CHURCHILL. He conveyed the remains to the Mortuary.

He produced a bundle of shingle weighing 7lbs. which was divided into his different pockets, 6s 10 1/2d. and a pair of spectacles were also found on the body but no ticket.

Dr. Spencer CHURCHILL, Melville-street, Ryde, spoke to being called to the Pierhead about 20 minutes past one o'clock on Sunday and saw the body of deceased on the boat. Artificial respiration was being carried out at that time but life was extinct. There was no water from the lungs and he thought deceased died more from shock than drowning. The coolness of the water and the depressed state of the man's mind combined with heart trouble was quite sufficient to cause the man's death. A

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he died more from shock than drowning. Miss DRUDGE said she saw him struggling in the water. His verdict would be that deceased died from shock occasioned by throwing himself from the steamship off Ryde with the intention of committing suicide. There was no evidence of trouble or insanity.

Insp. HAWKINS was present at the inquiry.

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