

A NONAGENARIAN LADY'S DEATH AT RYDE

Yesterday (Friday) the Deputy Coroner (Francis A. JOYCE, Esq.), at the Ryde Town-hall, inquired into the circumstances surrounding the death of Mrs. Annie Fannie WALKDEN, whose age is believed to be between 95 and 96, and whose body was recovered from the foreshore at Players on Thursday. Inspector H. ROGERS was present.

Evidence as to finding the body was given by Derek Frank SALMON, a 13-year-old schoolboy, of Binstead House Lodge, Binstead, who said that while walking along the foreshore at 8pm he saw the body covered with seaweed lying under the wall.

Mrs. Ella MARSH, of 83 West-street, deposed that she had known the deceased for seven years. On Wednesday morning she took some beef tea to her flat in High-street. On the previous evening an envelope, in deceased's handwriting has been put through her letter-box. It contained two florins and what purported to be a will. Witness returned the florins in the envelope and told deceased she must have made a mistake and put the coins in the envelope thinking it was her purse. She had never known the deceased threaten suicide. She understood that she was the wife of Capt. Wilberforce WALKDEN, who died some years ago. Deceased told her she had no relatives, except a sister in America from whom she had not heard for many years. Besides her old age pension she had an income from some trust. She had her own furniture and Dr. CHURCHILL had been very kind to her.

Evelyn Katherine MADDOC, ladies outfitter, of 9 High-street, said deceased occupied the top flat of the premises. On Thursday she left to go for a walk at 10.30 a.m. and as she did not return within her usual time, witness reported the matter to the police in view of the fact that deceased was taken from the edge of the sea at Springvale on Tuesday. On the previous occasion she asked deceased what she had done and she replied she had fallen into the sea and that it would not happen again. Although she was a good walker witness had never known deceased go as far as Springvale. During the last few months deceased had suffered from giddiness. She had plenty of everything in the house.

P.C. BAKER said he recovered the body from Players' foreshore. The head was about 2ft. from the wall and the legs facing the sea. The body was fully clothed except for a hat, and he found a walking stick beside the body. There was a cut over the right eye and abrasions on the top of the head. On Tuesday deceased was brought to Ryde Police-station, it being stated that she had been found in the sea at Springvale and was suffering from loss of memory. She said she knew the Rev. St. ALPHONSE, of Holy Trinity Vicarage, who called and took her home.

Dr. SPENCER CHURCHILL, 2 Vernon-square, said he had attended deceased for some years, chiefly for insomnia. On Tuesday he went to deceased's flat. Her composure was quite surprising and she was enjoying her tea with a boiled egg in a perfectly normal manner. She told him she had slipped into the sea. The following day she asked him about treatment for blemishes on her face. – The Coroner: A bit of vanity still remaining, Poor old lady! That doesn't show much evidence of insanity? – Dr CHURCHILL replied that her behaviour on both occasions never suggested suicidal tendencies. He found a cut on the right eye-brow and abrasions on the head. it would be difficult to say whether she died from her injuries or from drowning. If she had fallen over the wall the shock of hitting a rock would stun her and she would drown, being unconscious.

The Coroner returned a verdict that deceased died from injuries received falling over the sea wall and that there was not sufficient evidence to show whether it was by accident or otherwise.
