

SAD BOATING FATALITY.

The storm of Thursday night last week proves to have taken its toll of local victims. About eleven o'clock on that day, a young gentleman, named **Warwick KNOWLES**, who has been staying for some time with his parents at Victoria Chambers Ryde, started with his sister, Miss Gladys KNOWLES, and a local waterman named **Charles RIDGLEY**, for Southampton. They had hired a small pleasure boat called the Dewdrop, from Mr BARTLETT. This little vessel had the reputation of being a very good sea boat. She was of the Itchen type, and was partly decked, with a booby hatch. The party got to Southampton all right, but it was a rough passage, and when off Cowes a large wave struck the boat and the young lady was simply drenched. We understand that she went to some baths to get her clothes dried, and declined to go back with her brother in the little yacht, but preferred to return by steamer. The waterman RIDGLEY and Mr KNOWLES left her at Southampton at 2-30, and soon after three started back for Ryde. What took place afterwards is purely matter for conjecture. RIDGLEY had been acquainted with the sea from his earliest years, and he bears the reputation locally of being a thoroughly good boatman, and doubtless did his best. Boatmen cannot understand, however, why, in the face of such a tremendous storm, he did not turn for shelter into Hamble Creek. However, he did not do so, but came into the Solent, where the terrific wind blew him from the course to Ryde over to the north shore, close to Browndown Point. Some of the watermen think that what he should then have done was to let the boat drive with all the force of the wind on shore. The boat only drew 3ft. of water, and some of the watermen opine that if RIDGLEY had done that they could have jumped out in shallow water with some chance of saving their lives, though the boat would have been wrecked. But RIDGLEY seemed to have been too solicitous about saving the boat to do this, and threw out the anchor, which was on about twenty fathoms of hemp cable. Such an anchor, though all right for ordinary emergencies, was no use in such a storm. The boat dragged, met the waves broadside, and broke in two. The bodies were picked up on the following morning, but as the boat had no name painted upon her, it was some time before those in Ryde who were anxious about those missing received indisputable proof that their hope that they had got in somewhere out of the storm was in vain.

THE INQUEST.

Mr E. GOBLE, the County Coroner, held the inquest on Saturday afternoon, at Forton, when the following evidence was given :

Dr. James DAVIES, of Ryde, deposed that he had known the deceased, Warwick KNOWLES, a short time, and he identified the body. Deceased had been staying with his father and mother, at Victoria Chambers, Ryde. He was 16 years of age. Witness last saw him alive on Wednesday or Thursday morning, and he was then quite well.

Miss Gladys KNOWLES, sister of deceased, deposed—I last saw my brother on Thursday, about twenty past two. He left me at Southampton Swimming Baths. He was a student at Radley College, Abingdon, near Oxford. He left me to go to Western Parade for the yacht to catch the three o'clock tide. I went from Southampton to Ryde by the ten minutes to four steamer. We went from Ryde to Southampton in the yacht in the morning. It was called the Dewdrop, and was about 4½ tons. In the yacht going to Southampton were deceased, myself, and the boatman RIDGLEY. Deceased was accustomed to boats, was captain of his boat at college, and a good swimmer. The yacht belonged to Mr BARTLETT. On going over to Southampton a wave came over the boat at Cowes, and I was drenched. We have been out in the same yacht with RIDGLEY practically every day for seven weeks. He was a most cautious man.

William BARTLETT, mariner, of Ryde, deposed that he was the owner of the Dewdrop, which was a pleasure boat of about 4 tons, and he let her on hire. He sailed her himself for four or

five years, but RIDGLEY had been working her for over four years. Young Mr KNOWLES' mother engaged the boat, and the young gentleman had been sailing about in her six weeks. She was a well built, well found boat, her sails being No 4 18in canvas. She carried a mainsail and jib. She had no life belts on her, but there were two cork cushions which answered the same purpose. The boat left Ryde at 11 o'clock on Thursday morning. She had recently been repaired, and the name was omitted, as he proposed to dispose of it. She was what he called "a little big boat"—nearly 22ft long and 8ft beam. She had a tremendous flat floor bottom, and did not require much ballast, but she had 30 cwt. to two tons of pig ballast, and it was impossible for the ballast to move.

By a juror.—The anchor was strong enough to hold a ten ton boat, and she also had 25 fathoms of 2½ inch cable. Anchors or cables on such an occasion as this would not have held her any more than a scraper. The anchor was let go, the boatman apparently doing so to stop her driving ashore. This brought her round head to wind and sea, but she must have been driven broadside on to the shore. She must have gone ashore early to be in the position that she was.

Georgo PILE, chief officer of coastguard, stationed at Stokes Bay, said on Friday morning at 4.45, the man on duty at Browndown saw the mast of a yacht out of the water with a little flag flying. On the beach he discovered a body near the waters' edge. The man called witness out, and he gave orders for an examination of the yacht to be made. Witness went on the beach himself and discovered a second body. The last body had no jacket or boots on. There were brown stockings on the feet and one grey stocking, partly pulled on, on the right foot. The body had also a belt on. Went to the yacht and found the hull in two halves. The mainsail was set, with three reefs taken down. The small jib was also set. Witness began to clear the rigging away from the hull and found a lady's jacket (produced) entangled in the rigging.

This was identified by Miss KNOWLES as her jacket.

The chief officer of coastguard, continuing his evidence, said the anchor of the yacht was down with about 20 fathoms of hemp cable out, attached to the mast of the yacht. The anchor was quite polished showing that the vessel had undoubtedly dragged its' anchor on a sand or gravel bottom. The anchor was sufficient for the yacht, but not on such a stormy night.

By the Jury.— There is no doubt the boat dragged her anchor some distance, until she touched the ground, and then went to pieces. In my opinion she foundered about ten o'clock at night.

William Jas. MOORE, commissioned boatman, Stokes Bay, deposed to finding the body of Mr KNOWLES on the Beach at five a.m. on Friday. Deceased had on a guernsey, light striped trousers, one brown boot, a pair of blue socks, and a collar on which was the name "KNOWLES."

John Henry RIDGLEY, masons' labourer, said his deceased brother, Charles William RIDGLEY, was 40 years of age. He was single, and lodged with a woman named SHEATH at Buckingham Place, Ryde. He was a good swimmer. He always gave the boat in question a good character.

Dr. E. J. HUNTER, Gosport, said he had viewed the two bodies, and was of opinion that death was caused by drowning.

The Coroner briefly summed up the evidence of the sad case, and expressed sympathy with the family of the deceased.

The Jury returned a verdict that the deceased were accidentally drowned.

THE FUNERALS

The funeral of Mr KNOWLES took place Tuesday morning, the first part of the service being held at the Parish Church. The Rev Canon SHEARME officiated, assisted by the Rev Gerald RICHARDSON. The service was extremely impressive, and the appropriate hymns, "Fierce raged the tempest o'er the deep" and "Thy will be done," were beautifully rendered by the choir. The outside coffin, of pannelled oak, with massive brass fittings, bore the inscription—"Warwick Livy

KNOWLES, born June 6th, 1887, drowned September 10th, 1903." It was conveyed to the church on an open Washington car, driven by four horses, the reins being covered with white silk ribbon and the whips tied with the same.

The following is a list of the mourners—Mr Jas. F. KNOWLES, Mrs KNOWLES, Miss KNOWLES, Master Bruce Millington KNOWLES, Misses Eileen and Joyce KNOWLES, Mrs and Miss TYAS, Mr J. CARTER-OWEN, Mr T. BEST, Mr P. Craven HALL, Lieut. H. GARTSIDE-TIPPING, Canon SHEARME and the Rev Gerald RICHARDSON.

There was a large attendance at the Cemetery, and much sympathy was expressed with the family so sadly bereaved. There were a large number of floral tributes from relatives and sympathising friends. The funeral arrangements were efficiently carried out by Messrs Coombes, of Cross Street.

The funeral of Charles William RIDGLEY took place on Tuesday afternoon. The coffin, which was of polished elm with brass fittings, was covered with the Union Jack, and followed to the Cemetery by deceased's brothers, Captain STANNOY, the members of the lifeboat crew (of which deceased was second coxswain) and about fifty watermen and friends. The Rev Canon SHEARME officiated. There were many beautiful wreaths. Messrs COOMBES carried out the funeral arrangements.

Researched & typed by
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