

Owen Llewellyn Low

Isle of Wight County Press – 6 August 1898

DISTRESSING BATHING FATALITY AT NEWPORT.

On August Bank Holiday a distressing bathing fatality occurred in the river Medina, near the West Medina Cement Mills. An ironmonger's apprentice, named Owen Llewellyn Low, aged 18, son of Mr. J. J. Low, of Trafalgar-road, Newport, pulled down the river in a boat on a full tide, accompanied by another lad, named Arthur Caudrey, of Hunnyhill. Neither appeared to be able to swim. Caudrey bathed in 3 ft. or 4ft. of water, and then deceased pulled out into mid-stream and dived off the boat, which he intended to cling to to keep himself up. He, however, was unable to get back to the boat and was drowned in the presence of his comrade before assistance arrived. Deceased was a very promising lad, having been a much-respected and exemplary member of the St. Thomas's Church choir, whilst he was a successful student in technical education and directions, and he was also a member of the Rechabites Friendly Society. He had not long since recovered from an attack of influenza.

An inquest was held at the Sir John Barleycorn on Tuesday morning by the Coroner for the Island (Edward F. Blake, Esq.). Mr. William Cooke was chosen foreman of the jury.

Arthur Caudrey, of Hunnyhill, cashier in the employ of Messrs. Timothy White Company, said that on the previous morning, about 9.20, deceased and witness went down the river in a boat, which they took from the Quay. They rowed down to the West Medina Cement Mills. Witness undressed and then got into the water, which was about three feet deep. Deceased waited till witness had finished bathing and then rowed out to mid-stream, undressed and dived off. Deceased was out of his depth. Deceased rose to the surface, but witness saw he was struggling and kept on "bobbing up." Witness could not get the boat near deceased till he came up for the last time, when he put out a rope and an oar, but could not reach deceased. Deceased said he could not swim, but he intended to catch hold of the boat to keep himself up. Witness did not know how deceased's forehead became bruised. The tide was about turning at the time. He had not bathed with deceased before. Witness called for assistance and boat came, but it was too late. There was no one else but witness in the boat. It was deceased's wish to go out into the middle of the river to dive off.

William Cooper, master mariner, of Pyle-street, said he heard a boy had been drowned and pulled down to the Mills in a boat, and after some time he found the body of deceased lying on the mud. They landed the body at Hurstake and it was afterwards taken to deceased's home.

Dr. Barr said he was sent for on the previous evening to examine deceased, and from the general appearance of the body he was satisfied that death was due to drowning. He noticed a bruise on the right temple and a wound under the right eye, but neither would have caused death.

The Coroner briefly summed up, remarking that it was difficult to understand why deceased, not being able to swim should have insisted on going into the middle of the river before diving off the boat. The only question for them was whether blame attached to any one, and no one could possibly be to blame for what had occurred to deceased.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned."

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