

Walter Samuel Clench

1901 census, 4 Drake Road, Newport

George Clench	Head	53	Schoolmaster	Stourpaine, Dorset
Anna Clench	Wife	50		Hursley, Hampshire
Ernest G Clench	Son	15		Portsmouth, Hampshire
<i>Walter S Clench</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>12</i>		<i>Portsmouth, Hampshire</i>
Sarah A Caplehorn	Sis-in-law	49		Hursley, Hampshire

Isle of Wight County Press 21 July 1906

SAD BATHING FATALITY AT NEWPORT.

On Tuesday evening a distressing drowning fatality occurred in the River Medina, off Hurstake, the victim being Walter Samuel Clench, aged 17 years, the promising son of Mr. George Clench, a well-known resident of Newport, with whom and Mrs. Clench and family the deepest sympathy is felt in their terrible bereavement.

The inquest was held by the Acting Deputy-Coroner for the Island (James Eldridge, Esq.), at the Ship and Launch, Hurstake, on Wednesday evening. Inspector Cass and Sergt. Hawkins were present on behalf of the police.

George Clench, of 4, Rosehill-terrace, Newport, schoolmaster, father of the deceased, said after having tea on the previous evening, deceased left home to bathe in the river. He was in good health and spirits. Deceased often went down the river to bathe, but only began learning to swim last summer. He was a member of the Rowing Club. Witness did not think deceased ever intended to get out of his depth, and he (witness) had always told him not to do so. He was a timid lad.

The Acting Deputy Coroner expressed the deep sympathy felt by himself, and he was sure the jury, with Mr. and Mrs. Clench.

Mr. Clench, in acknowledgement, said he was deeply indebted to those who very kindly tried to resuscitate his son. He believed from what he had heard that they did all they could.

Reginald Tyler, 14, of 25, High-street, Newport, said on the previous evening deceased went out in a boat, and then had a bathe. Witness was just coming out of the water as deceased went in. They were bathing off the Rowing Club stage at Hurstake. They stood on the edge of the water together, and deceased said the water was very cold. Witness then went in and commenced dressing. There were only two others bathing on that side of the river. Witness got on part of his clothing and went out on to the stage and saw deceased swimming on his back towards Newport. A boat was coming down, and witness told deceased to look out. Deceased then turned round and came back towards the stage. Witness went in and finished dressing, and when he went out again on the stage they were asking others, who were in a boat, if they had seen anything of the deceased. They said no, and told Mr. Sheaf about it. About 20 minutes elapsed between the time witness came out and when the inquiries were made about deceased. Witness had heard that deceased could only swim on his back. When witness spoke to deceased about the boat coming he was about 20 yards from the shore and out of his depth. Witness thought the tide was coming in. Witness heard no cry or sound whilst he was dressing. Deceased was bathing alone. When witness told deceased of the approach of the boat, he was alone in the water. It was about an hour and a half after witness spoke to deceased that his body was brought ashore.

A juror (Mr. John Way) said what witness had said was quite correct, as he (Mr. Way) was passing about 7 o'clock and saw nothing whatever. Witness said deceased could swim a little. He did not notice anything about the tide which was likely to draw deceased from shallow into deep water.

Alfred Sheaf, mariner, of the Ship and Launch, Hurstake, said about 8 p.m. he received a report that deceased had been missing for about half an hour. Witness recovered the body about half-past 8 with his nets. The body was within 50 or 60 yards of the boathouse, in the middle of the river. Witness got the body ashore, and efforts were at once made to restore animation by artificial respiration. Mr. A. Chappell (wharfinger), Inspector Cass and Acting-Sergt. Sibbick assisted, but their efforts, for about three quarters of an hour, were of no avail. There was a depth of about 5ft. of water 20 yards from the shore, and the banks sloped. There was not current enough to carry any one from near the shore into deep water.

Dr. Hutton Castle said about 20 minutes to 9 on the previous evening he was called to Hurstake, and arrived there about 9 o'clock. Efforts were still being made to restore animation by Inspector Cass and Sergt. Sibbick. Witness examined the body and found no trace of life whatever. Further, there was evidence that he had been dead some time – an hour, at least. Deceased had certainly been drowned, as his lungs were filled with water. Deceased might have been exhausted or chilled, or it was possible that, being out of his depth, he might have become frightened and sunk, or he might have had cramp. Witness happened to know that deceased's heart was sound. He should like to add that he was greatly struck with the efficient manner in which Inspector Cass, Sergt. Sibbick and others were applying artificial respiration. It could not possibly have been done better. If deceased could have been saved they would have saved him.

The Coroner, in summing up, said it was a very sad thing that a young life should be, as it were, thrown away in that manner. Whilst it was most desirable that there should be bathing, it seemed essential to say how necessary it was that young fellows who bathed in the river should have learned to swim as early as possible, and that they should not bathe alone. In the present case deceased was bathing entirely alone, and apparently made no cry, and there was nothing to show that he was in distress, otherwise help might have been rendered him. He thought perhaps, if the Press would note that caution, it might be helpful, because it seemed so very saddening that the river should take its toll from the young men of Newport in that way.

The jury, of whom Mr. Frank Cooper was foreman, returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned," and the Coroner added that those who were present rendered all the aid possible, and did everything they could to save the deceased.

The jury agreed.

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At a special meeting, on Wednesday evening, of Newport Rowing Club, of which deceased was a member, Mr. T. R. Tilling, presiding, the Chairman feelingly moved, and Mr. A. Chappell, seconded, a resolution expressing deep sympathy and condolence with the family of the deceased, and the same was carried in silence. The deceased was a bugler in the Newport Company of the Church Lads' Brigade.

Research and transcriptions by Bob Jacobs for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,
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