

Lily Marian Jackson

Hampshire Advertiser – 26 June 1889

NEWPORT

MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF A CHILD.

On Monday morning the Coroner (Mr. F. Blake) held an inquest on the body of Lily Marian Jackson aged 5½ years, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, living in Upper Field-place. The child attended school on Friday afternoon, and after leaving at 4 o'clock nothing was seen or heard of her (although there was a rumour that the child had been seen at Wootton Bridge with a hawker) until her dead body was found, on Saturday evening, in the stream between Westminster and Mr. Arnold's mill.

The mother said the last time she saw the child alive was at 1 o'clock, on Friday afternoon, when she left home for the national schools. The child, who was usually punctual in returning from school, did not do so on the day mentioned. Deceased was not in the habit of going down to the millstream, and witness could not think she went down alone.

James Henry Black, clerk at Mr. Roach Pittis's, and living at Westminster House, deposed that the millstream ran down by the side of the house. About 6 o'clock on Saturday evening, his youngest sister came in, and said there was a straw hat floating in the stream. Upon going to the spot he saw the body of the deceased floating on its back, with the hat over its eyes. The body was lying under the bank on the opposite side, in from 3 to 4 feet of water. Scores of children played in the road near the opening of the stream, 50 yards from where the body was found, and he should consider the place dangerous, as the stream was unprotected. During the past fifteen years he had seen quite of a lot of children fall in the water at this place. The current was very strong at that point, and a child falling in would be carried down the stream in a second or two. There was no one at Westminster House on Friday.

Police-constable Attrill proved taking the body from the water, and placing it in the stables where Dr. Bair saw it.

Dr. Bair deposed that from an examination of the body he should say the child had been in the water for several hours. There was a slight graze in the forehead, but no marks of violence. There was no doubt death arose from drowning.

Police-sergeant Spanner said that he had made inquiries, and found that deceased left the school with the other children, at 4 o'clock, and was seen by the school-mistress to go on the mall. After that he had been unable to find any trace of her.

In summing up, the Coroner said the evidence showed the whereabouts of the deceased was not known from the time she left school on Monday [*] afternoon till her lifeless body was found in the stream on Saturday evening – a space of six hours [*]. He did not suppose there was any suspicion in their minds that the child came by her death through her own wilful act, or by that of any other person. The spot where she was supposed to have fallen in was a very dangerous one, being an unprotected place, and it had been stated that children had often fallen in there before.

The jury returned a verdict of 'Found drowned.' They added a recommendation that as the spot was a dangerous one, the Corporation ought to take means to have it fenced in, or protected in some way.

* The text appears in error here, the child went missing on Friday, not Monday; and the time she was missing was greater than six hours, probably twenty six hours.

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