

## **Stanley Short**

**Isle of Wight County Press**

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### **YOUTH DROWNED AT COMPTON BAY**

### **BORSTAL CAMP ENDS IN TRAGEDY**

### **COMPANION RESCUED**

How a camping holiday for well behaved Camp Hill Borstal boys ended in tragedy at Compton Bay was described to the Coroner (Mr. R. E. A. Webster), when he conducted an inquest in the Town Hall, Yarmouth, on Tuesday, on Stanley Short, 19, of Sewell Road, Carrock, Carlisle, who disappeared while bathing on Saturday afternoon.

Dr. J. Kiszoley said he had made a post-mortem examination which proved that death was due to drowning.

#### **A Vain Search.**

Evidence of identification was given by Lionel Victor Greenwood, principal officer at Camp Hill. Short, who had been discharged from the Army, had been at Camp Hill since last August, and was one of a party of boys in camp at Compton Bay. On Saturday afternoon witness took a party of 21 boys to bathe in the bay. The tide was coming in and the sea was choppy but not rough. The waves were not big enough to knock anyone over, and the boys were told not to go out of their depth. In accordance with official instructions he remained on the beach with a life-line and whistle, and another officer went into the sea with the bathers. Within five minutes witness heard a shout for help, but could not see who had cried out because all the boys were bathing within a small radius about 15 to 20 yards off-shore. The other officer rescued a boy named Cook who was in difficulties and who had to be revived with artificial respiration. It was two or three minutes before the boy could tell them anything and he then said "Short pulled me under" and "Short is still in the water", or words to that effect. The other officer, accompanied by three strong swimmers, went out in search of Short, but found no trace of him. Witness considered that the boys were bathing within their depth. He asked a charabanc driver to notify the Coastguards. At Freshwater Bay a boatman considered that the sea was running too high to take out a boat, and told him that it would take about one and a half hours to get the lifeboat round from Yarmouth.—Replying to the Coroner, witness said that he had had no trouble with previous bathing parties, nor any suspicion of a boy being in danger.—After the Foreman of the jury (Mr. P. Bennett) had stated that there were dangerous places at Compton where the tide had scoured holes or troughs out of the sandy bottom, witness said he had never bathed there, but on previous occasions the other officer had encountered the troughs referred to. In reply to further questions, witness denied that there was any skylarking or horseplay, and said that, like all the boys who were taken out to camp, Short was very well behaved.

#### **Heard Shout For Help**

Herbert Hayward, a principal officer at Camp Hill, said he was in the water with the boys and the water would be up to the chest of Short, who was 5ft 3in. in height. After a few minutes he heard a shout for help and went to the assistance of Cook, whom he saw go down. He found Cook on his back and got him ashore with the help of one of the boys. On their way, a wave broke over them and Cook got a

mouthful of water. Witness gave artificial respiration at once and after five or six pressures Cook ejaculated "Short caught hold of me, and I tried to save him". Witness did not have to go into deep water to save Cook. With three strong swimmers he then searched in vain for Short, staying in the water with one of the boys for about 35 minutes. They searched the beach until 11 p.m., and resumed the search next morning. He agreed with the Coroner that it was very feasible that a wave might have carried Short off his feet, and that he might have got a mouthful of water. Short, who was very keen on the water, was learning to swim. Before going into the sea the boys were given advice, and there were two or three powerful swimmers to help to guard the party.—Replying to the Foreman, witness said he did not consider that any of the boys were in danger.

### **Survivor's Story**

Ernest Albert Cook, 17, of 43 Darlington Street, Wolverhampton, stated that he was not a strong swimmer. He could swim best on his back. He went bathing with the others, and with the water just above his waste the waves were carrying him off his feet. He saw Short taken off his feet by a wave, heard him call for help, and saw him go under. He went over to him and Short grabbed his wrist. When they were under the water his wrist was released and he came to the surface, but could hardly move his legs. Short was playing with a ball and following it deeper into the sea when he went under. Witness was still within his depth when he came up, but did not remember anything more until he found himself on the beach. The Foreman pointed out that there was a possibility of the undertow carrying anyone already out of their depth into deeper water.

Charles William Barnes, of Briar Cottage, Brook, gave evidence of finding the body on the beach about a quarter of a mile from the old lifeboat house shortly after 5.30 a.m. on Sunday.

The Coroner reminded the jury that they had had evidence that Short was chosen to go to camp as a result of his good behaviour, and they could assume that he was a good type of lad, and would be behaving himself. The officers had carried out their instructions with regard to the safeguarding of such bathing parties and the boys had been warned against going out of their depth. There was a bit of a swell and as Cook had stated that he was carried off his feet by the waves, and Short was in the water up to his chest, he thought the jury could see what had happened. He asked them to take into account the suddenness with which such tragedies occurred, and the fact that all precautions as laid down by higher authorities were observed by the officers.

### **The Jury's Rider**

The Foreman said the jury had come to the conclusion that the boy's death was an unfortunate accident and that everything possible had been done to save him, but as a rider, they recommended that in the future the stronger swimmers should bathe on the outside of the main party.—Returning a verdict of accidental death, the Coroner said he thought the rider was reasonable and wise, an opinion which was heartily endorsed by the Deputy-Governor of Camp Hill (Mr. J. S. Haywood).

Sir Godfrey Baring, Bt. (chairman of the board of visitors), said the Board deeply regretted this unfortunate accident and extended their sincere sympathy to the family, and the Foreman of the jury and P.-Sergt. Taylor, on behalf of the police, associated themselves with the expression of sympathy.

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