

Edmund Roland Matthews

1891 census – Cemetery Lodge, Fairlee Road, Whippingham

Edmund Matthews	Head	80	Lodge keeper	Newport, Isle of Wight
Jane Emily Matthews	Wife	56		Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight
<i>Edmund Matthews</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>??</i>	<i>Whippingham, Isle of Wight</i>
Mary E Matthews	Daughter	16	Milliner	Whippingham, Isle of Wight

Isle of Wight Observer – 23 June 1900

NEWPORT

DROWNING FATALITY

On Saturday forenoon, at the Swan Hotel, Newport, an enquiry was opened by the Deputy Coroner, Mr. H. R. Hooper, concerning the death of Edmund Roland Matthews, aged 29, an insurance agent, who met with his death by drowning on the previous day in the Medina. Mr. Robert Roche was foreman of the jury.

The first witness was Emily Read, wife of Ernest Read, of Noah's Ark, Little London, Town Quay, Newport, who stated that about ten o'clock on Friday morning, the deceased came and asked if he could have a boat to go down the river. Deceased appeared to be in his usual health. He had often had boats from them.

John Spragg, a young labourer, employed at the West Medina Cement Mills, said about twenty minutes to eleven he saw a man in a boat opposite the Mills. He watched him for about five minutes, his reasons for doing so being the man was quite naked. He saw him jump over the side of the boat, and swim forty or fifty yards up the river with the tide. He then disappeared. He did not recognise the man at the time. When he saw him disappear he gave an alarm to the crew of a schooner which was lying alongside the Mills.

In reply to several questions, the witness said deceased did not appear to be suffering from cramp. As far as he knew – and he knew him pretty well – the deceased was a fairly good swimmer.

Alfred Sheath, landlord of the Ship and Launch, Hurstake, who assisted in dragging for the body, said he found it about 5.30 on Friday evening, on the east side of the river.

The Coroner asked the witness if the crew of the schooner endeavoured to do anything, and Supt. Ayres replied that they put off in a boat, and could find nothing save the boat with the clothes in it.

Witness also added that his son had told him he had seen the deceased bathe a great many times.

George Hill Wallbank, local superintendent of the Peal Life Insurance Company, said the deceased ought to have been at the office at 9.30, and had no right to be on the river bathing at eleven o'clock. Witness further intimated that the deceased's weekly accounts were missing, and that on behalf of the Company he should lay claim to the money found on him.

Mr. Morgan (a juror) said the jury had nothing to do with the question of private accounts.

Dr. Stanley Foster said he examined the deceased the previous night, and found the ordinary evidence of drowning - froth at the mouth and fluid in the stomach. On the left eye there was a slight scratch, which would have no bearing whatever upon the death of deceased. He was clearly of opinion that he was drowned.

Mr. Wallbank, said deceased had been a collector, and had been with them seven weeks only.

Mr. Williams (a juror) said he did not think the jury wanted to hear anything about that. It was wasting their time.

The Foreman. – Let the money be given to him I am only sorry that a Company should feel it part of their duty to make these representations.

The witness said he thought the object of the inquiry was to ascertain the state of the man's mind. These business matters threw a great deal of light upon it.

One of the jurors remarked that that was not a County Court.

Mr. Williams (a juror) said he thought so far as the jury was concerned they might reckon that the poor man's debts were paid now that he was dead.

Mr. Upton (a juror) asked the Coroner if he thought this evidence material.

The Coroner. – I can only say, gentleman, most emphatically that I think it is immaterial.

Mr. Upton. – That being so, I think we ought to support the Coroner.

Witness. – Then I enter a protest on behalf of the Company I represent.

The Foreman. – I am sorry for the Company.

The Superintendent. – It is not the case of the Company. It is a question as to the state of the man's mind.

The Deputy-Coroner, summing up, said the evidence fully satisfied him that this was not a case of suicide, but of accidental drowning. A man who was going to commit suicide did not usually take off the whole of his clothing and afterwards swim fifty yards. The fact of the deceased having money in his possession did not suggest suicide.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned." It was stated that members of the Newport Literary Society had taken to the entire cost of the funeral.

Just over £1 was found in the pockets of the clothes of the deceased in the boat.

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The funeral of the late Mr. Edmund R. Matthews, was largely attended, those present including members of the Newport Literary Society, Volunteers, and St Thomas's Sunday Teachers, and a deputation from the Cricket Club. There were wreaths from the two last named. The first part of the service was at the Parish Church, and the interment took place at the cemetery, the Vicar officiating, assisted by the Revs. M. Atkinson and S. Lessey, M.D.

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