

Reginald Smith

**Isle of Wight County Press
18 December 1937**

RUPTURED HEART WHEN CYCLING UP-HILL.

NEWPORT YOUTH'S SUDDEN DEATH.

That his death was due to a ruptured heart, caused by over exertion in cycling up-hill against a strong wind, was the decision at an inquest held in the Guildhall, Newport, on Saturday morning by the Deputy Coroner (Francis A. Joyce, Esq.) on the body of Reginald Smith, aged 16, a fitter's apprentice employed at the Somerton works of Messrs. J. Samuel White and Co., at Cowes.

Maude Florence Smith, of 130 Pyle-street, Newport, the lad's mother, said her son left home on his bicycle at 7.30 on the previous Thursday morning to cycle to Somerton, where he had been employed for three weeks. She had often warned him not to struggle up the hills on the road, but she was afraid that he did so. He had only had a cup of tea before leaving home, but that was not unusual, as he never had breakfast. She packed up his lunch and dinner, and he took a flask of tea. About 20 minutes after he left he was brought home in a car. Dr. Jones was called and came immediately, but her son was dead when he arrived. He had been cycling for about three years. Although rather thin the deceased had been in good health; in fact he had never been attended by a doctor.

Stephen Carr, an officer at Parkhurst Prison, deposed that he was walking down Horsebridge-hill from his house to the prison at about 7.40 on the morning of December 9th when he saw the lad riding up the hill with his head down. He was struggling along against the strong wind and the steep gradient, when, as he had almost reached Noke Corner, he wobbled and fell from the machine. Witness picked him up and carried him to the pavement. He was then unconscious, and apart from one or two convulsions, did not move. A passer-by informed him who the lad was and he stopped a motorist, who conveyed him home. He had reached the highest part of the hill when he fell.

Dr. John H. Jones, of Newport, said he was called to 130 Pyle-street at about 8 a.m., and saw the body of the deceased lying on the couch. Death had taken place some little time previously. A post-mortem examination showed that all the lad's organs were healthy, but there was a minute rupture of the wall of the heart near the apex, undoubtedly caused by over exertion. That was the cause of death. The only mark of injury on the body was a slight abrasion on the back of the right hand. The rupture was only about an eighth of an inch long.

P.C. Hartnell said the road was 27ft. wide at the spot and in good condition. There was no defect in the cycle, except that the handle-bars were forced a little to the right by the fall.

The Coroner said that in spite of all warnings boys would ride up hills. He did the same thing when he was a young man on the old high ordinaries, which was much harder work. A ruptured heart sometimes caused the death of athletes who were exerting themselves to

the full, but it was very rare for it to happen in one so young. His verdict would be in accordance with the doctor's evidence, and he expressed sympathy with the mother in her unexpected and sad bereavement.

Mrs. Smith thanked the Coroner for his remarks, and said she was very grateful to Prison Officer Carr and the doctor for what they had done.

Dr. Jones, in acknowledging this expression, said the boy was evidently anxious to reach his work in good time, and although he must have felt distressed, he pluckily continued to ride up the hill.

Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,
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